

# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

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## **THESIS**

**RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WEST:  
THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY REFORM**

by

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December 2002

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This thesis examines the impact of NATO-Russia relations on the process of military reform in the Russian Federation. The military reform process within Russia that aims to create a lean, professional military that Russia can afford and that will better serve Moscow's defense needs is hampered by a lingering perception of a threat from the United States and NATO, despite significant evidence to the contrary. A reformed military would reduce the burden on Russia's economy and would be better matched to the immediate and future security needs of the Russian state. A cooperative relationship between Moscow and the West could help to ease the perception of a threat posed by NATO. This could encourage the creation of a Russian military capable of joint operations with Western militaries, especially in the realm of counter-terrorism and peacekeeping operations. A military reformed along these lines could serve as a cornerstone for a strengthened Russian democracy that would allow Russia to become, once again, a player on the world stage. A willingness by NATO and the United States to pursue increased military and political cooperation with Moscow offers an opportunity to influence positively the military reform process within Russia.

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THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY REFORM**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, a portion of the military and political leadership in Russia began to recognize the need for a dramatic reformation of the Russian military. Russia's huge military structure, based on a massive system of conscription and an approach to military superiority through quantity rather than quality, placed an excessive economic and social burden on Russia. These would-be reformers failed to gain support for their efforts to reverse this trend, which ultimately contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Resistance to reform continued throughout the 1990's as Russia's economic and social conditions continued to decline. While a confrontation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) became a remote possibility, a fixation upon the supposed threat posed by Alliance persisted within the Russian military leadership. The military has grudgingly begun an effort to reform, but thus far it has failed to achieve the dramatic changes that advocates of military reform insist are needed.

The military reform process within Russia that aims to create a lean, professional military that Russia can afford and that will better serve Moscow's defense needs is hampered by a lingering perception of a threat from the United States and NATO, despite significant evidence to the contrary. While the unreformed Russia military denies Moscow a coercive tool and, in the short term, has offered the United States and NATO greater latitude for action, a reformed Russian military is in the long-term interests of Russia as well as of NATO and the United States. A reformed military would reduce the burden on Russia's economy and would be better matched to the immediate and future security needs of the Russian state. A cooperative relationship between Moscow and the West would help to ease the perception of a threat posed by NATO. This could encourage the creation of a Russian military capable of joint operations with Western militaries, especially in the realm of counter-terrorism and peacekeeping operations. A military reformed along these lines could serve as a cornerstone for a strengthened Russian democracy that would allow Russia to become, once

again, a player on the world stage. A willingness by NATO and the United States to pursue increased military and political cooperation with Moscow offers an opportunity to influence positively the military reform process within Russia.

In the last decade, NATO and the United States have struggled to create a new relationship with Moscow. Cooperation between NATO and Russia has been made difficult by the Alliance's enlargement and by U.S.-inspired initiatives perceived in Russia to have been crafted as opportunist reactions to Russia's weakened political, economic, and military position. Today, much of Russia's hostility to NATO has been submerged. But concern over the expansion of NATO into the Baltic, Russia's desire to influence NATO's decision making process, and the future shape of relations between Moscow and the Alliance remain significant sources of tension. This uneasiness surrounding the relationship with the United States and NATO fuels opposition to the military reform process in Russia, giving its opponents the justification they require as they struggle to maintain a large military structure oriented against a Euro-Atlantic threat. This inhibits force rationalization and modernization, and places the Russian military in a poor posture to deal with more salient threats on Russia's periphery.

While the unreformed military has left Moscow in a weakened position, allowing the United States and NATO greater degree of freedom in the international arena, a reformed Russian military, working in cooperation with the Alliance, could reduce the existing burden of maintaining a stable security environment. The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US-led effort in Afghanistan highlight the growing threat to global security emerging in Central Asia. Because the Russian military currently lacks the capability to maintain security in Central Asia, the United States and its allies have been forced to intervene there, further stretching limited military resources. Russian performance in Chechnya demonstrates that any effort by Moscow to act would have the effect of a blunt instrument that discredits the whole anti-terrorist effort by its brutality. Likewise, the unreformed Russian military continues to place an excessive burden on the Russian

economy and society that threatens to have larger economic and political implications for a vast state still in the process of democratization. A reformed Russian military, combined with strengthened ties between Moscow, the United States, and NATO, would lessen these problems.

The election of President Vladimir Putin in March 2000 marked a significant change in Moscow's domestic and foreign policy. Domestically, Putin moved quickly to consolidate presidential power in the Russian government. He discarded President Yeltsin's rhetoric, which claimed that despite appearance, the economic and social situation in Russia was improving.<sup>1</sup> In his first State of the Russian Federation address in July 2000, he warned that the military reform process was not working and that Russia faced economic catastrophe; that "the very survival of the nation" was at stake unless drastic action is taken.<sup>2</sup> Accompanying this recognition of Russia's domestic situation was a realization that adversarial relations with the West undermined prospects for economic recovery. Moscow's dependence on aid from the West, including contributions from many NATO members, made maintaining good relations with Russia's former adversaries a high priority. As a result, Putin began to adopt a more accommodating and cooperative foreign policy approach in Russia's dealings with NATO.

Putin's policy changes face considerable opposition from the political and military elite within Russia, who see NATO as a threat to Russian influence in Europe and an organization that might seek to intrude on what they see as Moscow's sphere of influence. NATO's actions in Kosovo and the continued efforts toward a second round of enlargement provided the military with a potential threat that can be used to justify resistance to reform and offers political hardliners a target for anti-Western rhetoric. Thus far, however, Putin's

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Baranovsky. "NATO Enlargement: Russia's Attitudes." //ISS/CEPS European Security Forum, (Brussels, 9 July 2001. <http://www.eusec.org/baranovsky.htm>. 10 August 2002.)

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Huskey. "Overcoming the Yeltsin Legacy: Vladimir Putin and Russian Political Reform" in Archie Brown, (ed.) *Contemporary Russian Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 87.

popularity with the Russian people has allowed him to exercise a greater degree of personal control over foreign policy despite this opposition.<sup>3</sup> However, with no obvious successor to Putin who will continue his more cooperative approach with the West, and with his own declaration that he will not serve more than two terms in office, it is very possible that Moscow's policies could change dramatically after the end of his time in office.

The Russian President's attitude toward the West and his influence in the government have led to a more general acceptance of NATO's continued growth as the leading security organization in Europe. While Russia would still prefer that NATO action be taken in accordance with decisions by the UN Security Council or the OSCE, rather than unilateral actions such as the Kosovo campaign, it was quick to offer support for the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan, including the basing of troops from various NATO countries in former Soviet republics. This is a level of cooperation considered unthinkable just three years before when Russia effectively walked out of the Permanent Joint Council that it had established with NATO in 1997. While some issues remain, this new attitude toward the Alliance has included a greater willingness to compromise on the subject of NATO enlargement. Putin summarized his position in a statement made in November 2001: "Russia will have as close a relationship with NATO as the alliance is ready to have with us."<sup>4</sup> In doing so, President Putin appeared to place the burden of deciding the future course of NATO-Russian relations squarely on the shoulders of the Alliance and the United States in particular. Recent disagreements with the United States over a potential military action

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<sup>3</sup> For example, "With an approval rating of around 75%... Putin has a strong popular mandate that has so far allowed him to ignore grumbling within Russia's conservative military establishment and complaints that Russia has given too much and received too little from its support for the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism," in House, Karen Elliot and Andrew Higgins. "Putin Says Bush Shouldn't Go It Alone When Deciding How to Deal with Iraq", *Wall Street Journal*, (2 February 2002, <http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/021102Journal.shtml>, 29 October 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer. "Putin Serious About NATO," in *Moscow Times* from *Center for Defense Information Russia Weekly*, #186, (30 November 2001. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/182-2.cfm>, 10 August 2002).

against Iraq demonstrates that Moscow may back away from this cooperative posture if Russian interests are marginalized.

Chapter II outlines the recent history of the military reform process in Russia, particularly the growing ineffectiveness of the conscript-based force, the fiscal realities of the Russian economy, and the effort to restructure the military to deal with a wider variety of threats. It details the difficulty that Russia has experienced in initiating a meaningful reform effort and the frequent opposition to reform by the military leadership. The powerful influence of these top officers, combined with the limited civilian oversight of the armed forces, allows the perpetuation of a military system that is inconsistent with the needs of the Russian state and the realities of Russia's current strategic situation.

Chapter III examines the reasons for Russia's continued preoccupation with NATO and the United States as threats to its security. The evolution of NATO's relationship with Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union is discussed, including the impact of NATO's expansion effort and the reaction to the Kosovo conflict on Russia's threat perceptions and strategic outlook. It explores the influence this westward defense orientation has on Russian military doctrine, national security policy, and armed forces structure. An analysis of existing and emerging threats Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Far East demonstrates the weakness in the continued antagonistic perception of NATO and the United States, which acts as an obstacle to military reform needed to meet Russia's security challenges in these other regions.

Chapter IV explores the implications of recent agreements between Russia, the United States, and NATO on process of military reform in Russia. Particular attention will be paid to the cooperation between the Unites States and Russia that has emerged since the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and the NATO-Russia Council established by the "NATO at Twenty" agreements in early 2002, as well as the personal influence of Russian President Vladimir Putin. This cooperative relationship reduces threat perceptions and creates an external environment that promotes the process of military reform in Russia. The existing

and potential obstacles to maintaining and strengthening this cooperative relationship will be discussed.

Chapter V offers conclusions, provides policy recommendations on how the process of reform might be encouraged by external American and NATO influence, and offers some predictions for the future of military reform if a more cooperative environment can be maintained.

## **II. STATUS OF RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORM**

The issue of Russian military reform extends beyond the relatively simple issue of creating a force structure to match threats to security and economic realities. The legacy of the Soviet state infrastructure, geared toward the principal purpose of maintaining a massive military mobilization base, and with it a rigid command economy, remains a tremendous obstacle to the process of democratization and economic growth. Russia's transition to a consolidated democracy is far from complete, and the strong political, economic, and social position occupied by Russia's unreformed military will continue to have a negative impact on this transition. Likewise, Russia's status as a major regional power, even in its weakened condition, makes it an important factor in maintaining a stable security environment in Eurasia. Considering these relationships, and NATO's stated goals of promoting the growth of democratic institutions and the creation of a stable collective security environment, the course that the military reform process takes in Russia is extremely relevant to the Alliance.<sup>5</sup> An examination of the troubled history of Russian military reform illustrates a continued preoccupation with a Cold War military structure and a defense posture oriented against the West, despite growing evidence that such a military is neither required nor affordable.

The Russian concept of military reform is very distinct from the more strictly defined transformation and restructuring of those military forces subordinated to the Russian Ministry of Defense. Military reform, as a broader definition, applies to both the Russian military and paramilitary organizations and encompasses the "political, economic, and social questions attached to raising, sustaining, training, arming, deploying, and employing a military as an element of

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<sup>5</sup> *The Alliance's Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council*: Washington: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (23 April 1999). <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>. 19 August 2002).

Russian national power.”<sup>6</sup> This broader definition extends to the capacity of the Russian economy to support a defense structure appropriate to the threats it faces in the present international system and the recognition of Russia’s standing within that system.

## A. ORIGIN OF THE REFORM DEBATE

The military reform process first emerged in the late 1980’s with Gorbachev’s policy of *glasnost*. The relaxation of state control on the media allowed a public discussion on Moscow television in 1988, which presented the possibility of a small volunteer military replacing the existing conscript force and system of territorial militias. This ignited a wider debate within the media, as journalists, scholars and officers took sides in opposition to or support of a professional military.<sup>7</sup> Two separate government commissions were formed in 1989-90 to investigate the possibility of military reform; one under the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the other -- the Commission for the Preparation and Implementation of Military Reform in the USSR -- under the direction of the Supreme Soviet subcommittee on the armed forces.<sup>8</sup> In his book, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, Yale University Professor and retired General William Odom provides a concise account of the contending positions established by these two commissions, in a debate over military reform that continues today.

The Commission for the Preparation and Implementation of Military Reform, under the leadership of Major Vladimir Lopatin, proposed a radical reform agenda that would transform the existing Soviet Military in a number of areas. The commission organized by the General Staff and the Ministry of

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Jacob W. Kipp. *Russian Military Reform: Status and Prospects (Views of a Western Military Historian)*. (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 1998).  
<http://call.army.mil/fmso/fmsopubs/issues/rusform.htm>. 14 October 2002.)

<sup>7</sup> William E. Odom. *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 185.

Defense opposed many of Lopatin's reform ideas. The underlying goal of Lopatin's proposals was the reduction of the burdens imposed on the Russian economy by the large Soviet military and defense industry. Proponents of reform focused their arguments on a revised assessment of threats faced by the military and a desire to improve performance, morale and quality within the forces. Lopatin's commission proposed a gradual transition to a small, all-volunteer, professional army, with a focus four principle issues: elimination of conscription, establishment of civilian control over the military, realistic threat assessment, and budget cuts.<sup>9</sup>

The use of conscription in the Soviet military was to be reduced, and eventually eliminated. The living conditions and social support for enlisted men was also to be improved. The low quality of life of the average conscript made military service extremely unattractive. The conscript system drew sharp criticism from various segments of Soviet society, including the governments of several republics, which desired their own national military formations and disliked the practice of sending conscripts from their regions to perform military service under brutal conditions in distant corners of the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup>

Brutal treatment of soldiers and dismal living conditions, which made the conscript system so unpopular, would make the adoption of a volunteer military virtually impossible to realize in the absence of reform. The abuse of new recruits by older conscripts, *dovshchina*, had become a tremendous problem in the late Soviet era. While the military "claimed that the situation [was] under control," the reality was that violence within the armed forces ranks achieved horrific levels.<sup>11</sup> Statistical data on the scope of the problem is limited, but Richard F. Staar, senior fellow at the Hoover Institute, reported that an incredible 40,000 conscripts died as a result of brutal treatment, suicide, and ethnic gang

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 187-190.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Eugene B. Rumer. *The End of a Monolith: The Politics of Military Reform in the Soviet Armed Forces*. (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation. August 1990), pp. 20-21.

violence within the military from 1985-1990. This exceeded total Soviet losses during the war in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> Such a high number seems difficult to believe by American or European standards, but even if the figure is an overestimate by an order of magnitude, it dramatically illustrates the seriousness of the problem.

Lopatin's commission also recommended greater civilian control of the military. Parliamentary oversight of the military bureaucracy was to be established, opening the military to public scrutiny. The government and the Ministry of Defense would be required to work in conjunction with the legislature to establish defense policy. For such a relationship to exist, the veil of secrecy that surrounded the defense establishment would have to be lifted. In addition, the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff were to be clearly divided, with the ministry headed by a civilian rather than a military man.<sup>13</sup> These two bodies, which enjoyed a high degree of autonomy under the Soviet system, strongly opposed such transparency and subservience to civilian authority.

The commission called for a prioritization in defense spending and a force structure based on realistic threat assessments. These assessments should coincide with a doctrine of "defensive sufficiency" – e.g. (military power designed to provide an adequate defense the state from aggression rather than a coercive instrument or symbol of state prestige). The General Staff claimed not to object realistic threat assessment, but argued that parliamentary review of military threat evaluations would be unworkable as the separate institutions differed on what constituted a threat. The generals tended to view the international environment as inherently dangerous, while many of the reformers, including Lopatin, saw the existing environment as much less threatening. The reformers suggested that a more cooperative relationship with the West, including the

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<sup>12</sup> Starr cites three sources to support this figure: "Russia's Armed Forces," *The Economist*, (London: 28 August-3 September 1996), pp. 18-19; Stanislav Telegin "Umerla li v armii Dedovshchina?" *Krasnaia zvezda*, (4 July 1995), p. 3; and an interview with Lt. Gen. Stanislav E. Gaveto, deputy chief military prosecutor. Richard F. Starr. *The New Military in Russia: Ten Myths That Shape the Image*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), p. 65.

<sup>13</sup> Odom, pp. 188-189.

principle Cold-War rival, the United States, could have a positive effect on the process of reform.<sup>14</sup> Such attitudes were met with considerable skepticism within the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense, who were unwilling to look beyond the long-standing bipolarity of the Cold War.

Finally, the military budget was to be reduced dramatically, which would require significant reductions in the size of the military. The large defense bureaucracy was specifically targeted for reduction, as were the large number of the highly coveted general officer billets. The bloated and inefficient military education and training structure also drew criticism, and the commission suggested that it be cut dramatically. The special privileges associated with positions for general officers, resented by officers of lower rank who endured substandard living conditions, were also to be curtailed in an effort to reduce cost.<sup>15</sup> All of these cost cutting measures were not only required to reduce the burden on the Russian economy, but also to provide the extra funds needed to implement the various military reform measures.

The draft proposed by Lopatin's commission failed to gain approval, but it heavily influenced the reform plan established by Marshal Yazov, Gorbachev's Minister of Defense, in 1989. Yazov's plan called for the removal of civil defense troops and construction troops from the authority of the armed forces. Military districts and staff organizations were to be reduced in number, and general officer positions slashed by thirty percent. Thirty to forty percent reductions were planned in the military education system. Yazov agreed to a test program with volunteer soldiers under contract to begin sometime in the early 1990's, but refused to give further ground immediately on the issue of abolition of conscription. He emphasized a doctrine that would limit the military to dealing with external threats, avoiding a role of intervention in domestic disorders. Finally, he called for an increase in expenditures for housing and pensions for

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

servicemen. Yazov warned that it would take at least a decade to implement many of these changes.<sup>16</sup>

Marshal Yazov's plan was adopted by the Ministry of Defense in 1990, but never signed into law by parliament. It fell short of the reforms envisioned by Lopatin's commission, and ignored three of the most pressing issues: civilian control, budget cuts, and realistic threat assessment. Efforts to implement the plan proceeded very slowly and little had been accomplished prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the two opposing viewpoints established by Yazov and Lopatin would characterize the struggle to overcome military resistance to reform for the remainder of the twentieth century.

## B. MILITARY REFORM AFTER THE COLD WAR

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the brief but unsuccessful effort to preserve the existing military structure under the newly created Commonwealth of Independent States left Russia with few options. In May 1992, the Russian armed forces were established and General Pavel Grachev was installed as the first Russian Minister of Defense. The General Staff under Grachev retained much of its former Soviet character, with many general officers remaining in the same posts they held under the communist regime. While it was clear that the fledgling Russian state with its weak economy could not support the gigantic military structure it had inherited from the Soviet Union, this group also retained many of their conservative views on the prospects for reform and military designed for conflict with NATO. Under pressure, a reluctant General Staff began a very slow process of downsizing the military by disbanding divisions. Like his predecessors, Grachev's plan for reform continued to ignore many of the more pressing issues and concentrated on creation of the Mobile Forces, drawn from the remnants of his own former service, the Airborne Forces. The Mobile Forces received preferential funding and support, while the remainder of the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 191-194.

military, which were to have been cut drastically to reduce costs, remained in place. Deprived of the resources required to support the former Soviet military system, the bulk of the Russian military, comprised of an estimated 103 divisions, quickly began to decay.<sup>17</sup>

The influence of the American performance in the Persian Gulf War was apparent in Russian effort to establish the Mobile Forces. The Russian military identified several key components of the Western doctrine that had allowed a smaller, but technologically advanced force, to overcoming a quantitatively larger opposing military:

- Air operations lasted thirty-eight days, compared with only four on the ground, giving a ratio of 9 to 1.
- Use of the latest electronic warfare equipment, including AWACS and JSTARS, added to the element of surprise.
- Enemy communications were attacked simultaneously at all levels from tactical to strategic.
- Electronic warfare and fire strikes reinforced one another through careful coordination regarding target, location, and time.
- Intensity of air strikes had no precedent in any previous war.<sup>18</sup>

These lessons learned had both positive and negative effects. They encouraged the Russian military to pursue a force with similar capabilities, as the Gulf War appeared clearly to demonstrate how a smaller military force might be dramatically effective. The Mobile Forces were to be modeled after the advanced Western militaries observed in the Persian Gulf, equipped with “surface to surface missiles, multi-barreled rocket launchers, attack helicopters, air assault and air mobile forces (a strong special forces element), and appropriately matched reconnaissance and C3 [command, control, and communications] capabilities.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Colin Robinson. “Russian Armed Forces Reform: Reaching Fitfully Toward a Professional Force.” (Washington, DC: Center for Defense Information, 26 July 2002). <http://www.cdi.org/mrp/russian-mr.cfm>. 10 September 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Starr, pp. 68-69.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

However, it was also clear that a U.S.-led NATO force had the potential dramatically to out-perform the existing Russian military. It raised the concern that Russia might not be capable of opposing any conventional military effort by the West and served to heighten the perception of a threat posed by the old adversaries, rather than decrease them. These two contending impressions had the combined effect of creating paralysis in the military reform effort. Russia needed to create a modern, qualitatively improved military core in the form of the Mobile Forces. However, the perceived threat posed by Western technological advantage made a dramatic downsizing of less advanced forces to reduce cost more difficult. While these contradictory pressures were not the only factors in the slow pace of Russian military downsizing, they served the purposes of a military leadership famous for dragging their feet.

While some forces had been disbanded or reorganized and a Directorate on Military Reform created, Grachev achieved little tangible success in reforming the Russian military prior to the first Chechen War in 1995. The Russian military, including the fledgling Mobile Forces, performed poorly in that conflict. After the August 1995 defeat of the under-funded and undermanned Russian forces in Grozny by the Chechens, criticism of Grachev's preferential support of his service began to increase. The lightly equipped Mobile Forces were unable to perform as anticipated and the Russian military was ultimately forced to withdraw.<sup>20</sup> An estimated 6,000 Russian soldiers were lost before the end of the first Chechen War in 1996.<sup>21</sup> According to the Ministry of Defense, the conflict cost seven trillion rubles (approximately \$1.4 billion), not including the cost of expended military hardware. No additional funds were appropriated to offset this cost, further exacerbating the military's economic situation.<sup>22</sup> These dramatic

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<sup>20</sup> Pavel Felgenhauer. "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure," in *Russian Defense Policy Towards the Year 2000: Proceedings of the Conference at the Naval Postgraduate School*, 26-27 May 1997. Ed. Elizabeth Skinner and Mikhail Tsyplkin. (<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/Felg.htm>. 10 August 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Robinson. "Russian Armed Forces Reform."

<sup>22</sup> Felgenhauer, "Russian Military Reform: Ten Years of Failure."

losses, lack of military reform progress, and Grachev's declining popularity led to his replacement by General Igor Rodionov in 1996.

Rodionov quickly revealed that he believed the military's orientation toward a conventional war with the West remained appropriate. His perception of the threats to Russian security centered on an allegedly growing threat posed by NATO and he insisted that budget levels should be increased to fund the army's bloated battalions.<sup>23</sup> Rodionov insisted that military reform, which had been reduced to the simple process of force downsizing, could not proceed without a budget increase. A public dispute between Rodionov and Yuri Baturin, a civilian secretary on the Defense Council, over the costs of military reform, combined with Rodionov's open objection to a revised military doctrine, civilian oversight of the military, or any movement away from a conscription-based military, lead to his dismissal in 1997.<sup>24</sup> General Igor Sergeyev, of the Strategic Rocket Forces, succeeded him in May 1997 and began a new phase in the protracted effort to reform the Russian military.

Sergeyev was the first Minister of Defense who envisioned a Russian military that reflected the defense policy tasks outlined in the *Principle Guidance on Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* approved in 1993. These tasks included, "the simultaneous occurrence of stable nuclear deterrence and the sound preparation to handle local conflicts (to include simultaneous peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations)."<sup>25</sup> Under the new Defense Minister, the Strategic Rocket Forces were to play a much more prominent role, reflecting the continued practice of the generals who held the post to favor their own branch of service. A large military restructuring took place. The Space Forces were absorbed into the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Air Force and Air

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<sup>23</sup> Alexei G. Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia: Dilemmas, Obstacles, and Prospects," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No.4, (Spring 1998), p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson. "Russian Armed Forces Reform."

<sup>25</sup> Alexei G Arbatov. *The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya*. (The George C. Marshall European Center for Strategic Studies, 2000), p. 8.

Defense forces were combined under a single command. The Ground Forces Headquarters was eliminated and four military districts merged into two.<sup>26</sup> The slow process of reducing the number of individual formations continued, including some surprising reductions to the Mobile Forces.<sup>27</sup>

The reform strategy pursued under Sergeyev assumed that the deterrence value of the Strategic Rocket Forces would be sufficient to provide for security against external threats in the near-term, while the conventional forces were reformed. A greater emphasis was placed on force maintenance, and limited improvements in Ground Forces readiness were demonstrated in the second Chechen war in 1999. However, limited training and a shortage of junior officers continued to hamper combat effectiveness.<sup>28</sup> From 1997-1999, up to seventy percent of the defense budget was allocated to maintenance and personnel numbers were cut by thirty percent.<sup>29</sup> Research and Development and arms procurement were severely restricted. These very limited procurement funds were channeled into the production of new strategic weapon systems and little funding remained for the conventional improvements that a reformed military really demanded.

This over-emphasis on strategic weapons procurement lead to a dispute over service priorities between Sergeyev and Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin, a career Ground Forces officer. Again, internal squabbling demonstrated a lack of consensus within the military on the direction of reform or the types of forces needed to deal with the threats that faced the Russian Federation. President Putin's election and the replacement of Sergeyev by Sergei Ivanov, a former KGB associate of the new President, in March 2001 has

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<sup>26</sup> The Siberia Military District absorbed Trans-Baikal Military District. The Volga and Urals military districts were also merged, but the former Volga Military District headquarters was re-designated as the headquarters of the 2nd Army, so no units were actually disbanded.

<sup>27</sup> Robinson. "Russian Armed Forces Reform."

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, p. 8.

resulted in the reversal of Sergeyev's move to eliminate the Ground Forces Headquarters and the re-establishment of independent Space Forces. The first serious project to establish an all-volunteer unit, the 76<sup>th</sup> Airborne division, is now underway. It will serve as a test case for the further transition away from a conscript-dependant military.<sup>30</sup> However, the General Staff remains opposed to concept of an all-professional force, just as it had prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### C. THE STATE OF MILITARY REFORM TODAY

The status of Russian military reform today has hardly advanced since its inception in the late 1980's. The long disjointed history of military reform reflects many of the internal difficulties that have plagued the process. The most significant internal obstacle to the reform process has been the sustained opposition of the Russian military leadership, who refuse to part with the old-Soviet model. The lack of civilian oversight limits the ability of the government to force the pace of reform. For example, the official Russian estimate of the number of troops in the armed forces in 1999 was 1,200,000. In 2002, Ivanov announced, "that after a successful reduction of 91,000 men, Russia's armed forces now number 1,275,000."<sup>31</sup> According to these numbers, the military actually grew in size after an apparent reduction. Either the ministry of defense was deliberately underestimating the size of the armed forces in 1999, or the 2002 reductions that Ivanov cites are a fantasy. No accounting by civilian leadership outside the military hierarchy makes determining the real status of the military reduction very difficult.

The military leadership has also sought to obstruct the transition to a volunteer military. The military originally intended to delay the experimental

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<sup>30</sup> Robinson. "Russian Armed Forces Reform."

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Bransten. "Russia: Military Reform, A Priority On Paper, Continues To Confound Kremlin." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 11 February 2002. <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/02/11022002094838.asp>. 1 October 2002).

conversion of a single division to an all-contract force to at least 2005.<sup>32</sup> Only direct pressure from President Putin on the issue moved forward the timetable for its conversion. In an effort to support its contention that this effort is simply too expensive, the military repeatedly increased its cost estimates for the conversion of the 76<sup>th</sup> division. In December 2001, it was first announced that the conversion would cost 500 million rubles. By March 2002, the figure grew to one billion rubles and on 20 May 2002, Ivanov announced that the full transition would cost 2.6 billion rubles. No tangible evidence has emerged to support these dramatic increases in estimated cost and this appears to be little more than an effort by the military to portray the cost of transformation as prohibitively high.<sup>33</sup>

The military continues to argue in favor of the conscription force on the basis of cost effectiveness and the need to maintain a mobilization base. Without it, they claim the Russian state would be deprived of a vital source of trained reservists in the event of war. Such a position ignores the fact the Russian military lacks the capacity to equip these troops and further illustrates the General Staff's belief that it must be prepared for a major confrontation requiring a large military force. President Putin expressed the more widely held view of this issue at a Security Council meeting: "Our country's economy is no longer a command economy, but our mobilization system is as old as the hills. This is why we have a lot of changes to make."<sup>34</sup>

The military also contends that the system of deferrals should be cut drastically, allowing the number of conscripts drafted each year to increase to 600,000 men and the period of service reduced to six months.<sup>35</sup> This seems ignore the fact that such a program would dramatically increase the burden on

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Golts. "Russian Volunteer Military – A New Attempt?" in *Russian Security Policy and the War on Terrorism: presented at the Conference held on 4-5 June 2002*. (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

the already limited training budget and create a massive problem of rapid personnel turn over. Such a change in policy is highly unlikely, as the number of grounds for deferral continues to grow. Increasing public opposition to conscription makes any reduction in the number of deferrals politically unrealistic. A Public Opinion Foundation survey of 1600 Russians conducted in February 2002 found that only twenty-seven percent supported conscription, down from thirty-eight percent in 1998. Nearly two thirds of those surveyed supported a move to a volunteer force.<sup>36</sup>

This growing opposition is fueled by a number of factors: conscripts are paid a meager salary for their service, far below what they could expect in other occupations, and their standard of living has steadily declined since the early 1990's. President Putin described the situation at a Russian Security Council meeting in May 2001:

With all honesty we have to acknowledge that today the servicemen are less well off than the rest of the population. 40% of the servicemen's families have incomes that are smaller than the minimum living standard. Although according to the law, the military service is considered a special state service, I don't even want to start on the housing problem. The armed forces and the agencies, which are considered by law on an equal footing with them, are very, very poorly taken care of as far as the housing is concerned. Equally difficult is the situation with medical care. The hospitals and other medical institutions are in a deplorable state. There also exists the problem of adaptation to civil life the retiring officers and other servicemen.<sup>37</sup>

Poor discipline has lead to widespread hazing of troops by junior officers and more senior conscript soldiers. This cycle of brutality is self-perpetuating. As Yevgeny Gontmakher put it, the conscripts see this behavior as "one year they

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<sup>36</sup> "Alternative Service Under Fire." *Christian Science Monitor*, quoted in Alexander Belkin. "Civil-Military Relations in Russia After 9-11" in *Russian Security Policy and the War on Terrorism: presented at the Conference held on 4-5 June 2002*. (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Vitaly V. Shlykov. "Resource Allocation for the Military and Military Reform in Russia." in *Russian National Security Policy under Putin: presented at the Conference held on 7-8 August 2001*. (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2001), p. 12.

beat us, the next year we in turn beat the new draftees.”<sup>38</sup> In the one of the very few official statements on the matter of conscript hazing, at least twelve soldiers died in Chechnya as the result of hazing in July 2002 alone. Alexander Golts suggests that these casualty figures are typical for any given month in the Russian military and only reflect the incidents the military leadership is unable to conceal. The admission by Ivanov that the military is only managing to call up twelve percent of the men eligible for service indicates that draft dodging has become a critical problem. The military has been forced to resort to police sweeps through population centers to find recruits and force them to fulfill their service obligations.<sup>39</sup>

One of chief concerns surrounding the entire military reform debate is cost. For most of the 1990’s, the argument against the transition to smaller professional force better suited to Russia’s defense needs was that money was not available. The military justifiably argued that better pay was needed to attract volunteers, but that the forced retirement of large numbers of career officers in the effort to downsize the force would require huge sums to provide legally guaranteed retirement benefits. For example, the average wait for housing for military veterans in 1999 ranged from seven to nine years and only six percent of 164,000 eligible retired personnel had received apartments.<sup>40</sup> Russia did not report an official increase in nominal defense spending until 1999, when an additional 4.5 percent of the total federal outlay was allocated to defense, bringing the defense budget to 109 billion rubles.<sup>41</sup>

Since 1999, defense spending in the Russian budget has increased dramatically with each successive year. It rose to 218 billion rubles in the

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<sup>38</sup> “Weighing the Alternatives.” *The Moscow Times*, quoted in Belkin, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander Golts. “Russian Volunteer Military – A New Attempt?” p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Shlykov, “Resource Allocation.” p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance, 2000/2001*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 116.

FY2001 and to 270 billion rubles in 2002.<sup>42</sup> Defense spending will continue to rise in 2003. In August 2002, Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin announced that the 2003 budget would include over 346 billion rubles (10.9 billion dollars) for defense. This will account for nearly fifteen percent of the total budget and, according to Kudrin defense spending will increase more than any other budget category in 2003.<sup>43</sup> As dramatic as these increases appear, they may not accurately represent the total Russian defense spending effort. Large sums are actually spent with no parliamentary oversight, exceeding the amounts authorized in the budget. The actual economic burden on the Russian economy imposed by the military may be substantially higher, but lack of transparency in actual defense spending make these amounts difficult to calculate.

Despite this rapid increase in spending, the actual amounts available to the armed forces to institute reform and modernize are woefully inadequate. As much as fifteen to twenty-two percent of the defense budget is absorbed by the cost of inflation. In addition, budget items, which were previously listed outside defense expenditures in the past, have been included in the newer budgets. These include peacekeeping activities, railroad troops, government support for defense related industries, and benefits for servicemen. This contributes to the illusion of significant increases spent on the maintenance and improvement of the armed forces.<sup>44</sup> Personnel and maintenance costs demand an increased portion of the military budget with each successive year, leaving considerably smaller amounts for procurement and Research and Development than the dramatic increases in the overall budget might reflect. The inability to downsize the Russian military prevents significant increases in badly needed conventional arms procurement and the development of modernized military hardware.

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<sup>42</sup> Shlykov, "Resource Allocation." p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> "About 15% of all Budgetary Expenditures in 2003 to be allocated for National Defense." *Russia Weekly*. (Washington, DC: Center for Defense Information, 15 August 2002).  
<http://www.cdi.org/russia/219-1.cfm>. 18 August 2002).

<sup>44</sup> Shlykov, "Resource Allocation." p. 9.

Recent developments suggest that President Putin is making a renewed effort to motivate the nearly stagnant military reform effort that has plagued Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. His strong political position may allow him to overcome the more conservative military leadership and its continued resistance to reform. The larger process of democratization in Russia may depend on its success. If the process to reform the Russian military does not proceed, the economic, political, and social ramifications for the future of the Russian state could be dramatic. These effects could extend beyond Russia's borders to affect the many regions that share borders with Russia's vast territory. The next chapter will examine the real and perceived threats that have influenced Russia's strategic conceptions and military doctrine and the influence this exerts on the process of military reform.

### **III. IMPACT OF NATO – RUSSIA RELATIONS**

The military reform process in Russia is tied to Moscow's perception of its present and future security needs. The high costs associated with a completely reformed Russian military, based on a well trained and well-equipped professional force, requires a realistic assessment of the threats to Russian security. Russia cannot afford to maintain its existing, ponderous military structure, designed to fight large-scale conventional and nuclear war, while also enduring the economic strain of military transformation. Russia's *Military Doctrine* and *National Security Concept* emphasize the central role of its shrinking nuclear arsenal, while the current challenges confronting Russia increasingly demonstrate the weaknesses in such an approach. The Russian military's preoccupation with its old Cold War adversaries and a desire to maintain Russia's status as a great power dominate Moscow's resistance to the adoption of a realistic force structure designed to deal with its present and foreseeable security challenges.

#### **A. EVOLUTION OF NATO RELATIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Russia and the NATO alliance has had a significant impact on Moscow's security outlook. The Alliance has undergone a dramatic effort to transform itself to meet post-Cold War realities, while attempting to forge a more cooperative relationship with Russia. However, Russia's apprehension about NATO's expansion effort and the implications of the NATO intervention in Kosovo has made the maintenance of a cooperative relationship difficult. Skepticism about NATO's intentions remained strong within Russia's military leadership throughout the 1990's and fueled a conservative effort to resist substantial military restructuring.

The collapse of the Soviet Union presented NATO with a serious dilemma in the early 1990s. Since its creation in 1949, NATO's existence had revolved around the defense of Europe against potential Soviet aggression. In the wake of the Soviet collapse, the threat from the East quickly evaporated and the

continued existence of the Alliance was called into question. NATO was left with essentially three choices: attempt to ignore the change in the European security environment and maintain its collective defense focus, disband the alliance in favor of a new collective security structure in Europe, or redefine and refocus the Alliance's role to address a broader range of collective security issues emerging in contemporary Europe.

The first alternative -- that of maintaining NATO's old focus on collective defense against future Russian aggression -- was clearly the most unrealistic approach. While some fear of resurgent Russian ambitions in Europe remained, particularly in the east, the realization of Russia's weakness made this an unlikely contingency in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the continued primacy of NATO's collective defense mission threaten to create new dividing lines in Europe, preserving the "us and them" mentality of the Cold War, when a less adversarial relationship between NATO and the Russian Federation was clearly possible.<sup>45</sup>

While clinging to a Cold War focus against a threat from Moscow was no longer workable, the demise of the Alliance was equally unacceptable. Russia clearly favored this contingency, which would have dissolved or subordinated NATO and the collapsing Warsaw Pact into a new European collective security organization. In particular, there was a feeling among some members of that NATO should give way to a new collective security architecture based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), that would include Russia, Europe, and the United States in decisions on the future security of the continent. The danger of this approach became clear in 1991, when Moscow refused to recognize CSCE efforts to resolve the status of the three Baltic Republics and blocked efforts to grant the CSCE Conflict Prevention Center any effective power. The Soviets also attempted to enact treaties with former Warsaw Pact states that would have prevented their joining an alliance without

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<sup>45</sup> William J. Perry, Ashton B. Carter, and Hilary D. Driscoll. "Defining NATO's Purpose," *NATO at Fifty: Perspectives on the Future of the European Alliance*. (Center for Political and Strategic Studies, April 1999. <http://www.cpss.org/nato50bk/12.html>, 20 September 2002).

the approval of Moscow.<sup>46</sup> These Russian efforts clearly illustrated the danger of turning European security over to the CSCE, or any organization that required the approval of all of its members to take action.

It was quickly recognized that a re-orientation of NATO was necessary to keep the Alliance viable. NATO's value beyond its old Cold War focus on collective defense became clearer as the allies contemplated a Europe without the Alliance. The alternative alignments, the CSCE and the EU, lacked NATO's strength and reliability as an organizational mechanism and relied too heavily on the consensus of all members to take action. America's continued engagement in Europe could only be guaranteed by the trans-Atlantic partnership established and strengthened by American participation in NATO. It was clear that maintaining this partnership was highly desirable from both an American and European perspective.

NATO's internal functions increased dramatically in value in light of the changing geopolitical structure in Europe. The former Soviet puppet states of the Warsaw Pact were undergoing dramatic, and potentially destabilizing, political change. NATO's record as a stabilizing and integrating force in post-World War II Europe suggested that it could have a similar effect on the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. NATO also had managed the proliferation of nuclear weapons, denationalized defense planning, provided a forum to coordinate security policies, and encouraged democratic reforms, all of which promised to have a beneficial effect on these new neighbors.

The effort better to define NATO's role in a post-Cold War Europe evolved during the early 1990's. Most significantly, NATO published its new Strategic Concept at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Rome in November 1991. It highlighted the continued importance of NATO in shaping the future security environment in Europe. Specifically, four fundamental security tasks to be performed by the Alliance were defined:

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<sup>46</sup> David S Yost. *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*. (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1998), pp. 48-49.

- (i) To provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable security environment in Europe, based on the growth of democratic institutions and commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in which no country would be able to intimidate or coerce any European nation or to impose hegemony through the threat or use of force.
- (ii) To serve, as provided for in Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, as a transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests, including possible developments posing risks for members' security, and for appropriate coordination of their efforts in fields of common concern.
- (iii) To deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state.
- (iv) To preserve the strategic balance within Europe.<sup>47</sup>

These four tasks highlighted the significant new commitment to roles beyond collective defense, with an emphasis on the promotion of democracy and peaceful resolution of disputes through consultation. NATO asserted, "Our new strategic concept reaffirms NATO's core functions and allows us, within the radically changed situation in Europe, to realize in full our broad approach to stability and security encompassing political, economic, social and environmental aspects, along with the indispensable defense dimension."<sup>48</sup> The collective defense function was retained, but applied in a broader sense to potential future threats, with no direct reference to a specific potential adversary.

NATO's new focus, with its collective security emphasis, quickly became linked to enlargement of the Alliance. Significantly, the September 1995 Study on NATO enlargement outlined seven specific rationales as justification for enlargement and provided a foundation for NATO's role in the future of Europe:

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<sup>47</sup> *The Alliance's Strategic Concept agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council.* (Rome: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 8 November 1991. <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b911108a.htm>, 19 September 2002), Para 20.

<sup>48</sup> *Declaration on Peace and Cooperation issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (including decisions leading to the creation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)) ("The Rome Declaration").* (Rome: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 8 November 1991. <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b911108b.htm>. 19 September 2002), Para 4.

- Encouraging and supporting democratic reforms, including civilian and democratic control;
- Fostering in new members of the Alliance the patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus building which characterize relations among the current Allies;
- Promoting good-neighborly relations, which could benefit all the countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, both members and non-members of NATO;
- Emphasizing common defense and extending its benefits and increasing transparency in defense planning and military budgets, thereby reducing the likelihood of instability that might be engendered by an exclusively national approach to defense policies;
- Reinforcing the tendency toward integration and cooperation in Europe based on shared democratic values and thereby curbing the countervailing tendency toward disintegration along ethnic and territorial lines;
- Strengthening the Alliance's ability to contribute to Europe and international security including through peacekeeping activities under the responsibility of OSCE and peacekeeping operations under the authority of the UN Security counsel as well as other new missions;
- Strengthening and broadening the Trans-Atlantic Partnership.<sup>49</sup>

These points significantly downplayed the collective defense role to an even greater degree than the Strategic Concept published just four years earlier. They indicated an increased focus on the promotion of stability, reform, and collective security.<sup>50</sup> While all of these points were valid arguments supporting the enlargement of NATO, they represented a significant departure from the primacy of collective defense. While these statements continued to support the transformation of NATO's purpose, and the accompanying enlargement in the east, there was concern that the collective defense role had been set aside. Concerns that the decision making structure of the Alliance would be threatened

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<sup>49</sup> *Study on NATO Enlargement*. (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 1995. <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/enl-9502.htm>, 19 September 2002), Chapter 1, Para 3.

<sup>50</sup> The concepts of collective defense and collective security are distinct. “[C]ollective security ... involves a pact against war; the threat is aggression by a currently unidentified party to the pact, which should ideally include all the states in the state system. In contrast, a collective defense pact binds together an alliance of states to deter and, if necessary, defend against one or more identifiable external threats, a state or group of states outside the alliance.” Yost, p. 7.

by a significant enlargement that would also trouble relations with Russia by encroaching too quickly on the old Soviet sphere of influence persisted among leaders in the West, particularly in the United States.<sup>51</sup>

The criteria used to measure the acceptability of new Alliance members drifted away from the assessment of what the candidate states offer in terms of enhanced mutual defense value and towards an evaluation of how the integration of new members would contribute to the political and economic stabilization of the continent. If NATO's collective defense role was to be preserved, other European institutions might have been more appropriate as an inclusive instrument. The EU, with its direct economic and political emphasis, offered an attractive alternative to promoting stability through a NATO expansion process. The EU could serve as the pre-eminent structure for welcoming and encouraging new member countries into a larger European community.

While the European Union made some early suggestions that it was considering the eventual expansion its membership to former Warsaw Pact states, this process was, and continues to be, a slow one. Attempts to rely on the EU as a mechanism for inclusion have been hampered by two considerations: First, American influence in the EU was distinctly absent. While America welcomes the EU in theory, the United States and the EU regard each other as commercial and political rivals. America's dominant position in NATO and the differences between the Alliance and the Union have made cooperation on the issue of enlargement problematic. Second, several EU members have resisted expanding the EU for fear of competition from the cheaper labor economies of Eastern Europe and the detrimental effect enlargement could have on EU decision making.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence, offering membership in NATO has

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<sup>51</sup> *Open Letter to The President: 50 Former Policy-Makers Voice Concern over NATO Expansion*, (Washington DC: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 26 June 1997).  
<http://www.cpss.org/nato/plet.htm - pressrel>, 20 August 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Stephen George and Ian Bache. *Politics in the European Union*. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp 418-419.

been seen, on both sides of the Atlantic, as a simpler, cheaper, and faster alternative.

Despite this effort to promote collective security, there was and remains a strong desire to retain NATO's core mission of collective defense, a cornerstone of the Washington Treaty.<sup>53</sup> The interest in NATO membership within Central and Eastern European countries is not limited to the internal benefits of promoted stability and reform, but also the guarantees provided under Article V of the Washington Treaty.<sup>54</sup> Memories of betrayal by the West at Munich and Yalta linger in the psyche of the former Warsaw Pact States. Fear of abandonment by the West drives the desire for a concrete security guarantee. Consequently, the applicants viewed NATO membership, with the accompanying promise of collective defense, as the only reliable arrangement that could provide it.

The tensions between the effort to redefine NATO's purpose and the continued importance placed on collective defense create considerable skepticism in Russia. From the Russian perspective the expansion of NATO could be viewed simply as western opportunism. Is NATO's concentration on collective security simply "window dressing" intended to conceal NATO's adherence to its old anti-Soviet focus? Is it an effort to make the Alliance's continued existence more palatable to its former adversaries? Or does NATO's reorientation constitute a genuine effort to reform in a way that did not threaten Russian security? Lingering Cold War mistrust between the Russian leadership

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<sup>53</sup> "The Parties to this Treaty... are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security. They therefore agree to this North Atlantic Treaty." *The North Atlantic Treaty*. (Washington DC: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 4 Apr 1949, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/treaty.htm>. 20 September 2002), preamble.

<sup>54</sup> *The North Atlantic Treaty*. Article 5: The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the *Charter of the United Nations*, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

and the West continues to fuel this uncertainty. Therefore, reassuring Russia became a central part of NATO's strategy to successfully redefine its mission.

Efforts to reassure Russia began in 1990 with negotiations over the reunification of Germany. Russia had been resistant to the idea of a reunified German for a number of reasons, both rational and irrational. The United States led efforts to reassure Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev as negotiations on Germany slowly moved forward. The status of NATO forces, particularly US forces that might move into the territory of East Germany, proved to be the critical stumbling block. In February 1990, US Secretary of State James Baker asked: "Would you prefer to see a united Germany outside of NATO and with no U.S. Forces, perhaps with nuclear weapons? ... Or would you prefer a unified Germany to be tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?"<sup>55</sup> Statements such as these were taken by the Russians to imply that continued expansion of NATO into the former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Republics had been ruled out. While it appeared to offer a significant basis for early cooperation between Russian and NATO, it would become clear later that Baker's statement constituted neither the definitive view of NATO or the United States. As the disagreement over NATO's first enlargement intensified, these negotiations would be pointed to by Moscow as a promise broken by the West.

As relations between the Russian Federation and NATO developed, Russia signed on to two NATO efforts to promote cooperation with non-NATO members to the East. The first, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) established in the Rome Declaration in 1991 (later replaced by the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997), was a purely consultative effort to engage NATO's neighbors to the east. The second, the Partnership for Peace (PfP), was created in 1994 with the goal of creating a much deeper relationships through Individual Partnership Programs (IPP) developed in a "16+1" forum between NATO and the Partner. The stated purpose of PfP was defined as: "At a pace and scope

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<sup>55</sup> Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott. *At The Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1993), pp. 185-186.

determined by the capacity and desire of the individual participating states, we will work in concrete ways towards transparency in defense budgeting, promoting democratic control of defense ministries, joint planning, joint military exercises, and creating an ability to operate with NATO forces in such fields as peacekeeping, search and rescue and humanitarian operations, and others as may be agreed.”<sup>56</sup>

Russia’s participation in both the NACC and PfP was limited. While these efforts did increase consultation between Moscow and the Alliance, the Russian leadership remained skeptical. Russia delayed its acceptance of the PfP IPP until 1995 and its participation in PfP cooperation with NATO was limited to civil-emergency planning and has remained so.<sup>57</sup> Involvement in the NACC and PfP did not grant Moscow what it fundamentally desired: not only a voice, but also a veto in its consultation with NATO. Russia continued to push for NATO subordination to the OSCE<sup>58</sup>, where it could exercise greater control over Alliance activities. As the first round of NATO enlargement loomed, Russian opposition to NATO expansion increased. It became clear that a common understanding between NATO and Russia would be required before any attempt at enlargement could proceed.

This new basis for cooperation between NATO and Russia was established in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed in Paris on 27 May 1997. The Founding Act established the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as a forum for consultation and cooperation, enabling NATO and the Russian Federation to begin a more substantial program of security and defense-related cooperation.

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<sup>56</sup> Declaration of the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (“The Brussels Summit Declaration”). (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 11 January 1994. <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b940111a.htm>. 20 September 2002), Para 14.

<sup>57</sup> Andrei Kozyrev. Statement of the Acceptance of the Russian Partnership Programme, and the Broad, Enhanced NATO-Russia Dialogue and Cooperation beyond PfP, (Noordwijk: NATO Council, 31 May 1995. <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c950531b.htm>, 12 September 2002).

<sup>58</sup> The CSCE adopted the name Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in December 1994.

The main role of the PJC was to strengthen cooperation between NATO and Russia and to identify opportunities for joint actions. Regular monthly meetings of the PJC quickly led to a much closer dialogue, but with the understanding that both sides retained the right to take decisions independently of the other. The range of issues discussed included peacekeeping operations, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control, defense reforms, search and rescue at sea, civil emergency planning, scientific cooperation and environmental issues.

Along with the creation of the PJC, came a Russian acceptance of the first round of NATO enlargement. The Founding Act asserted the mutual “respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states and their inherent right to choose the means to ensure their own security, the inviolability of borders and peoples' right of self-determination.”<sup>59</sup> NATO achieved this agreement by making a number of concessions on future enlargement. These included a promise not to station large deployments of conventional forces belonging to existing member states or to deploy any nuclear forces or infrastructure into the territory of new members. NATO also agreed to a commitment that future expansion would not extend into the territory of the former Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> The Founding Act, in effect, removed a major stumbling block in the process of admitting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the alliance on 12 March 1999.

NATO cooperation with Moscow appeared to be on the right track until NATO became involved in the Balkans in 1999. As Operation Allied Force began within two weeks of the entry of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO, many in the Russian leadership viewed the two events as linked and part of a common strategy. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov suggested as much in his

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<sup>59</sup> *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*. (Paris: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 27 May 1997).  
<http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/fndact-a.htm>. 23 August 2002), Chap I.

<sup>60</sup> Sean Kay. *NATO and the Future of European Security*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 102.

speech to the Duma on 27 March 1999. When criticising NATO's military action against Yugoslavia, Ivanov commented that, "having only just acquired three new members, NATO has immediately demonstrated its aggressive nature."<sup>61</sup> NATO's actions were perceived by some as part of an opportunistic US strategy to establish a global hegemony. Moscow was also angered that it was not adequately consulted on this issue in the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. Russian President Yeltsin later stated:

Only the UN Security Council has the right to take the decision on what measures, including measures of force, should be undertaken to maintain or restore international peace and security. The UN Security Council has not taken any decisions with regard to Yugoslavia. Not only has the UN Charter been violated but also the founding act on mutual relations, cooperation and security between Russia and NATO. In effect what we have here is an attempt by NATO to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the uniform of world policeman. Russia will never agree to this.<sup>62</sup>

Yeltsin's statement illustrates the heart of Russia's opposition to the NATO action in Kosovo. Russia strongly objected to the decision to intervene without authorization by the UN Security Council or the OSCE. NATO's position that UN or OSCE authorization, while desirable, was not essential for the Alliance to take military action, was the source of great concern in Moscow. NATO's move to act without a clear mandate from the UN threatened the importance of Russia's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Moscow feared that a dangerous precedent for future NATO actions that could ignore Russian interests had been set. Further, Russia contended NATO intervention in Kosovo undermined UN authority.<sup>63</sup> The Security Council seat represents one of the few remaining symbols of Russia's self-image as a great power, and NATO's action appeared to further undermine Moscow's already weakened status. In response,

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Mark A. Smith. "Russian Thinking on European Security." (Sandhurst: Royal Military Academy, Conflict Studies Research Centre. August 1999. <http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc/new/f65-mas-compl.htm>, 2 October 2002).

<sup>62</sup> Yeltsin quoted in Smith in response to the commencement of Operation Allied Force.

<sup>63</sup> Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, p. 10.

Russia ceased all cooperation between its Ministry of Defence and NATO that existed under the terms of the Founding Act and discontinued its participation in the PJC.

Militarily, the failed attempt by a Russian battalion to seize the Pristina Airport on 12 June 1999 also contributed to Russia's humiliation. The move to preempt NATO intervention and hence stake Russia's claim for a voice in the future of the Balkans was initially greeted with an "explosion of national pride and enthusiasm" in June 1999. But Moscow's inability to support the battalion demonstrated the Russian military's inability to project power on even a small scale in the European theater. Viktor Chernomyrdin's attempt to negotiate an independent Russian sector ended in failure, and Russian forces in Kosovo were dispersed and subordinated to NATO command.<sup>64</sup>

NATO's intervention in Kosovo spurred the first serious discussions within the General Staff, Security Council, Foreign Ministry, and Duma "concerning [the possibility] of a military conflict with NATO" since the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>65</sup> It created a reactionary movement to reassert Russia's military power vis-à-vis the Alliance, and fueled suspicion about NATO's true intentions in the post Cold-War security environment. It ultimately led to the adoption of new Russian military and security policies that reemphasized Russia's preoccupation with a perceived threat from NATO and shaped the continued resistance to military reform.

## B. RUSSIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPT AND MILITARY DOCTRINE

Shortly after his entry into office in December 1999, President Putin signed two documents drafted by Russia's foreign and defense ministries that codified Moscow's security concerns and military objectives. Both the 10 January 2000 *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*, and the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 9.

*Russian Federation Military Doctrine*, signed on 21 April, are primarily philosophical in nature. Collectively, these documents outline Russia's national interests, security challenges, view of its position in the international community, and the expected roles of the Russian military. Discussion of operational issues is frequently vague as are the few references to a military reform process. But Russia's determination to maintain its illusory status as a great power is apparent. Military power, particularly in the form of nuclear weapons, assumes a dominant role in Russia's quest to assert a great power influence and has important implications for the military reform process.

The National Security Concept clearly states Moscow's view of the international environment, and Russia's desired place in it:

The situation in the world is characterized by a dynamic transformation of the system of international relations. Following the end of the bipolar confrontation era, two mutually exclusive trends took shape. The first of these trends shows itself in the strengthened economic and political positions of a significant number of states and their integrative associations and in improved mechanisms for multilateral management of international processes. Economic, political, science and technological, environmental and information factors are playing an ever-increasing role. Russia will facilitate the formation of an ideology of establishing a multi-polar world on this basis. The second trend shows itself in attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries in the international community, under US leadership and designed for unilateral solutions (including the use of military force) to key issues in world politics in circumvention of the fundamental rules of international law. The formation of international relations is accompanied by competition and also by the aspiration of a number of states to strengthen their influence on global politics, including by creating weapons of mass destruction. Military force and violence remain substantial aspects of international relations. Russia is one of the world's major countries, with centuries of history and rich cultural traditions. Despite the complex international situation and its own temporary difficulties, Russia continues to play an important role in global processes by virtue of its great economic, scientific,

technological and military potential and its unique strategic location on the Eurasian continent.<sup>66</sup>

The *National Security Concept* then goes on to state:

Russia's national interests in the international sphere lie in upholding its sovereignty and strengthening its position as a great power and as one of the influential centers of a multi-polar world, in development of equal and equitable relations with all countries and integrative associations and in particular with the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Russia's traditional partners [.]<sup>67</sup>

The Russian leadership makes several important statements in this document, including the assertion that Russia views the international relations environment as multi-polar in nature and that Russia holds great power status within that international order. This contrasts directly with the American position that the current international order is dominated by the United States.<sup>68</sup> The particular attention paid to "attempts to create an international relations structure based on domination by developed Western countries in the international community, under US leadership and designed for unilateral solutions," reflects a continued Russian preoccupation with the NATO alliance.<sup>69</sup> Finally, the National Security Concept continues the Russia effort to maintain a degree of regional hegemony in the former-Soviet sphere of influence now loosely included in the

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<sup>66</sup> *The National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*, 10 January 2000, original published in Russian Newspaper *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, (14 January 2000. U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, trans.) Quoted in *Arms Control Today*, (January/February 2000, Arms Control Association, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_01-02/docf00.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_01-02/docf00.asp). 24 October 2002).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> The American government's vision of a uni-polar international order is implied in the opening of the current US National Security Strategy, signed by U.S. President George W Bush. "The United States possesses unprecedented – and unequaled – strength and influence in the world. .... This is ... a time of opportunity for America. We will work to translate this moment of influence into decades of peace, prosperity, and liberty." *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington DC: The White House, September 2002). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>. 29 September 2002), p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> *National Security Concept*, 2000.

Commonwealth of Independent States or the area commonly referred to as the “near-abroad”.

Despite a reluctant Russian recognition that NATO enlargement into the former Warsaw Pact is now unavoidable, attempts to bring former Soviet republics, particularly the Baltic States, into a European defense and economic sphere are viewed as an encroachment into Russia’s own sphere of influence.<sup>70</sup> NATO access to states sharing a border with Russia specifically violates Moscow’s declaration that the Baltic is “a zone of vital interests.”<sup>71</sup> NATO forces with free access to the Russian frontier would require, under Moscow’s existing military doctrine, an increased allocation of limited conventional resources to the defense of that border. Russia has created new military formations in the Moscow and North Caucasus Military Districts, including two air armies that have been re-established. Russian naval exercises in the Mediterranean began to increase in the late 1990’s, as did efforts to strengthen the Black Sea and Baltic Fleets. The deployment of the final *Ushakov* class battlecruiser, *Piotr Velikii* to the Northern Fleet, rather than its planned assignment to the Pacific Fleet, reflects Moscow’s increased military reaction to NATO enlargement.<sup>72</sup>

The U.S. approach to dealing with Moscow is directly linked to Russia’s relationship with NATO. Understandably, NATO is still seen by many in Russia as primarily a military structure dominated by the United States, which clings to Cold War ideology of containment and aims to keep Russia in an inferior position. To some extent, this is a reflection of nostalgia for the defunct Warsaw Pact and of the old Soviet view of NATO as a client military structure that serves

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<sup>70</sup> In a January 2002 news conference, Russian President Putin said Russia opposed the "mechanical enlargement of NATO," but he appeared resigned that enlargement could not be blocked. "Every country has the right to decide its own security," he said. But he added that the Baltic States in NATO won't enhance the security of the U.S. or Europe and it will definitely make Russians feel more vulnerable." In House and Higgins, "Bush Shouldn't Go It Alone".

<sup>71</sup> "Moscow Inchng Toward Reluctant Acceptance of Baltic Admission to NATO." *Russia Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 177, (27 September 1999. The Jamestown Foundation. [http://russia.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon\\_005\\_177\\_000.htm](http://russia.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon_005_177_000.htm). 10 August 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Greg Austin and Alexay D. Muraviev. *The Armed Forces of Russia in Asia*. (New York, NY: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 172-173.

American interests. This view is given credibility by the fact that the dominant portion of forces and military expenditures committed to collective defense of NATO are provided by the United States, and by the fact that the American nuclear arsenal provides a great deal of NATO's strategic security, makes the United States the driving force in NATO decision making.<sup>73</sup> Given the unilateral nature of many U.S. security decisions regarding Russia, and their appearance in Moscow's eyes as simple American opportunism, the Russian Federation can easily draw the conclusion that Washington will use any future consultation with NATO to take advantage of Russia's current military and political weakness to advance an American agenda.

The rapid decay of its conventional armed forces has left nuclear weapons as the core instrument of Russian coercive political power. The destructive power of a large nuclear weapons arsenal provides Russia with a symbol of its geo-strategic status that supports its great power ideology. The belief that the importance of Russia's Security Council seat had been diminished by NATO's Kosovo campaign further magnified Moscow's dependence on nuclear weapons as a symbol of prestige and strength. Russia's nuclear arms forced NATO and the United States to maintain special relationships with what is otherwise a greatly weakened actor in Europe.<sup>74</sup> Russia's nuclear weapons have also prevented any serious consideration of an American or NATO-led effort to intervene militarily in Chechnya, despite great concern over human rights abuses by Russian forces and the inability of the Russian government to bring the conflict to a peaceful conclusion.

In addition to their importance as a political instrument, nuclear weapons have assumed a more dominant role in Russia's *Military Doctrine*. Russia's

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<sup>73</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter. "The Amorphous "New NATO" and America's Real European Interests," *NATO at Fifty: Perspectives on the Future of the European Alliance*. (Center for Political and Strategic Studies, April 1999, <http://www.cpss.org/nato50bk/44.html>, 20 August 2002).

<sup>74</sup> Dmitri Trenin. "Russia and the Future of Nuclear Policy," in *Chaillot Paper 48 – Nuclear Weapons: a new Great Debate*, ed. Burkard Schmitt. (Paris: Institute for Strategic Studies, Western European Union, 2001), pp. 111-112.

inability to project conventional military power in the Kosovo conflict and the glaring weaknesses in Russia's unreformed military led to an expanded role for its nuclear forces. The *Military Doctrine* clearly specifies the doctrine of nuclear response to not only nuclear, but also non-nuclear threats to national security.

The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, as well as in response to large-scale aggression using conventional weapons in situations critical to the national security of the Russian Federation.<sup>75</sup>

The Soviet Union's policy of no first use of nuclear weapons has been discarded.<sup>76</sup> "Nuclear weapons are no longer regarded simply as a deterrent, but as a means of warfighting."<sup>77</sup>

From the Russian perspective, the primacy of nuclear forces is a product of fiscal and military reality. Russia possesses less than half as many conventional forces, quantitatively, as the NATO has available in Europe alone. The further expansion of NATO will increase this disparity.<sup>78</sup> This reliance on nuclear weapons to offset conventional inferiority offers an inadequate response to NATO expansion. Even worse from Moscow's perspective, the Russian use of strategy designed to counter a perceived US threat in Europe has been applied to Russia's southern and eastern theatres as well, where it has proven remarkably ineffective in dealing with real security threats.

## C. WEAKNESSES OF RUSSIA'S MILITARY DOCTRINE

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<sup>75</sup> *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, 21 April 2000, original published in Russian Newspaper, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (22 April 2000). Translated by U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Quoted in *Arms Control Today*, (May 2000, Arms Control Association, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000\\_05/dc3ma00.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00.asp). 24 October 2002).

<sup>76</sup> The concept of "nuclear first use" was first adopted in the Russian Military Doctrine of 1993. The 2000 version is distinct in that it extends the use of nuclear weapons as the first Military alternative in a wider range of contingencies. This including large-scale conventional attacks similar to NATO's operations in the Balkans. Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, pp. 15-16 and Trenin, pp. 114-115.

<sup>77</sup> Trenin, p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, p. 5.

The greater deterrence value of nuclear arms and their low maintenance costs when compared to conventional forces make them an attractive option when considering the limited finances available to maintain the Russian military. Though he has now been replaced, former Defense Minister Sergeyev oversaw the development and eventual approval for the *Military Doctrine* that reflects his approach to military reform. As discussed previously, Sergeyev advocated a reform strategy that relied heavily on a relatively well-funded nuclear weapons program to insure Russian security and to provide time for the more difficult and lengthy process of reforming the conventional forces. Prior to the signing of the 2000 *Military Doctrine*, the Duma adopted the law *On Financing the Defense Contract for Strategic Nuclear Forces* that devoted about forty percent of the Russian defense budget to strategic forces. In addition, the “law emphasize[d] the use of tactical nuclear forces as the prime candidate for first use against large conventional attack.”<sup>79</sup>

The concept of using nuclear weapons in the short term to shield conventional force reform is not totally unrealistic. However, it assumes that a large nuclear arsenal can deter threats to Russian security. Critics of the nuclear first use strategy claim that it may not be a credible deterrent against NATO or the United States. A large-scale military confrontation between Russia and NATO or the United States remains a very remote possibility. Meanwhile, the potential for future operations similar in scale to the NATO intervention in the Balkans remains high. Russia’s nuclear arsenal and the prestige that accompanies it did little to dissuade NATO from acting in Kosovo before Russia’s National Security Concept and Military Doctrine were published. While these documents suggest that Russia would be willing to use nuclear weapons in the event of a conventional attack that threatens Russia’s survival, it is not clear that the doctrine of nuclear first use will actually deter future NATO or American action outside Russian territory.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

While Russia's reliance on nuclear weapons has proven successful in maintaining a degree of Russia's geopolitical influence, it has a number of critical weaknesses in light of the emergence of a number of non-traditional threats on Russia's southern periphery that cannot be adequately addressed by Russia's nuclear arsenal. These threats, in particular the ongoing insurgency in Chechnya, require conventional forces trained and equipped to deal with them. But thus far Russia has been unable to reform its conventional forces adequately to meet these challenges. The *National Security Concept* does recognize these problems.

Adverse trends in the military sphere are being assisted by delays in reforming the military and the defense industry of the Russian Federation, by inadequate funding for defense and by a poor regulatory and legal framework. At the present time, this can be seen in the critically low level of operational and military training in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and of the other forces and military bodies and authorities, and in the impermissible drop in equipment of the forces with modern armaments and military and special hardware, and in the extreme acuteness of social problems; this leads to a weakening of the military security of the Russian Federation as a whole.

Threats to the national security and interests of the Russian Federation in the border sphere are caused by the following:

- economic, demographic and cultural-religious expansion by neighboring states into Russian territory;
- increased activity by cross-border organized crime and also by foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>81</sup>

However, despite this candid assessment, the lack of substantial military reform since the *National Security Concept*'s publication leaves the Russian Federation in a poor position to face many of its present and future security challenges.

Defense Minister Sergeyev's replacement in March 2001 reflects some recognition of the flaws in a doctrine that so heavily emphasizes nuclear forces.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *National Security Concept*, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Trenin, p. 116.

As discussed previously, the continuing conflict in Chechnya has demonstrated the Russian military's limited capacity to deal with these new threats. The cost of the campaign has certainly strained Russia's limited defense budget, creating an additional burden that limits the funds available for military reform. While Chechnya has been occupied, the devastation of Grozny and other areas has destroyed the region economically and inflicted heavy casualties on the civilian population. Guerilla attacks continue to plague the Russian occupation forces and the spread of terrorist groups threatens to destabilize the rest of the Caucasus. Moscow's inability to bring the conflict to an end raises serious concerns that Russia will not be able to simultaneously handle similar regional conflicts, maintain a strong nuclear force, and carry out any real program of military reform.<sup>83</sup> For example, the Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee in the Russian Duma, Alexei Arbatov, has suggested that the Russian military could complete a successful transformation that addresses many of the armed forces capability limitations within ten years. In his Marshall Center Paper, *The Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine: Lessons Learned from Kosovo and Chechnya*, he offered several alternative models, with variations in the size of Russia's nuclear arsenal, conventional force size, and defense spend that could accomplish this goal. However, he asserts that any successful transformation of the military will only be possible if Russia brings the Chechen conflict to a conclusion and avoids similar regional conflicts until the reform process is complete.<sup>84</sup>

Russia is unlikely to face a large-scale conventional or nuclear war in the near future. However, the time remaining for Russia to conduct meaningful military reform to meet future security challenges may be running out. Short and long-term security challenges are emerging in Central Asia and the Far East, in addition to the existing problems in the North Caucasus. Russia can no longer

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<sup>83</sup> Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 24-26.

afford to delay the military reform process if it hopes to meet these challenges with a modern, rehabilitated military.

The ongoing Chechen conflict has lead to the deployment of more conventional forces in the North Caucasus Military District than any other Military District in Russia, exceeding the deployments limits for the region established by the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. This includes large numbers of Russia's best-equipped and trained troops, as well as forces from the MVD and FSB. Russia also has numerous peacekeeping commitments in other states in the region.<sup>85</sup> The North Caucasus region is likely to remain the most active theater for the Russian military for the foreseeable future.

Russia faces a number of non-traditional threats in Central Asia. Difficulties in maintaining border controls on Russia's border with Kazakhstan have lead to severe problems with drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Russian border guards in Tajikistan have been unable to eliminate most of the illegal traffic that enters the region from Afghanistan. This problem is primarily due to a lack of resources and limited customs controls on the region's numerous internal and external borders.<sup>86</sup>

The mixture of various ethnic groups in the region, divided by artificial state boundaries established under Soviet rule, increases the potential for ethnic or nationalist conflict. The Russian populations remaining in the Central Asia republics, particularly northern Kazakhstan, could prove to be a source of ethnic tension. Russia's desire to maintain its influence in the region and to protect the interests of these ethnic Russians could led to interventions Moscow in future ethnic conflicts.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Austin, pp. 174-175.

<sup>86</sup> Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Federov and Ghia Nodia, eds. *Russia and The Caucasus and Central Asia, The 21st Century Security Environment*. Vol. 2, *Eurasia in the 21st Century: The Total Security Environment*. (Armonk, NY: The East West Institute, 1999), pp. 187-188.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 188-189.

Russia's greatest long-term security concern is its future relationship with China. Currently, relations between Russia and China are tension free. Both countries share a number of short-term interests, led by opposition to “the idea of a world led by the United States and favor a multipolar international order.” This was affirmed in the *Declaration on a Multipolar International System*, signed by both countries in April 1997.<sup>88</sup> More importantly, China has become the leading market for Russian arms exports. “Russia is selling technology that would take China a very long time and huge financial resources to develop by itself and which it absolutely could not get anywhere else.”<sup>89</sup> Russia’s military sales to China include warships, “air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles, tanks (T-72s), fighters (Su-27s), armored fighting vehicles, and modern electronic devices.”<sup>90</sup> The two countries’ shared economic and geopolitical interests will likely serve to maintain a cooperative relationship in the near-term.

However, long-term prospects for good relations between China and Russia are less promising. At its current rate of economic growth, China is expected to develop further its own defense industrial complex. The extraction of Russian military technology, in addition to hardware, will ultimately make China less dependant on Russian arms exports. As the technology gap between Russia and China closes, “the economic benefits of Russian arms sales will increasingly be outweighed by the potential security risks of delivering sophisticated arms technologies to China.” This is of particular concern to Russia’s military leadership, who view China’s ever-increased conventional military capability with growing skepticism.<sup>91</sup> Russia already faces a numerical inferiority in conventional forces to China in the Far East. A drastic increase in

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<sup>88</sup> Gerhard Mangott. “Farwell to Russia: The Decay of a Superpower.” In *Europe’s New Security Challenges*, ed. Heinz Gärtner, Adrian Hyde-Price, and Erich Reiter. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), p. 394.

<sup>89</sup> *The Economist*, (26 April 1997), p. 19 quoted in Mangott, p. 394.

<sup>90</sup> Mangott, p. 395.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 397.

the Chinese nuclear arsenal, combined with the continued decline in the size and age of the Russian strategic nuclear force, could result in a “numerical parity” in these weapons “between 2010 and 2015.” This would eliminate Russia’s only remaining military advantage over its most powerful Asian neighbor.<sup>92</sup>

Beyond the issues of military balance, the demographic changes occurring in the Far East will become increasingly threatening to Russia. The slow process of Russian migration out of the region and the growth of the ethnic Chinese population are weakening Moscow’s control over these distant provinces. “Roughly 5 million Russians are facing 130 million Chinese along the border rivers.” The pressures of overpopulation in northern China, exasperated by limited resources in region the may increase the likelihood of territorial disputes along the border.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, China’s growing interest in Central Asia could lead to a deterioration of relations with Moscow. Russia’s view of the former-Soviet republics in Asia as part of its own economic sphere of influence may be challenged by Chinese efforts to access the region’s oil and gas export markets. Chinese agreements with Kazakhstan in September 1997 to construct new oil pipelines to the Pacific coast threaten Russia’s current monopoly on energy export from the region.<sup>94</sup> A dispute over influence in the region could lead to a deterioration of relations between Moscow and Beijing as China’s military power begins to rival that of Russia.

Moscow’s preoccupation with NATO has led to an over-emphasis on nuclear weapons as the central element of Russian military power. The cost of maintaining a large nuclear arsenal, combined with the military leadership’s reluctance to implement a serious reform program and the economic strain of the conflict in Chechnya, has left Russia vulnerable to a number of threats in other regions. Without a reorientation of Russia’s military away from a perceived

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<sup>92</sup> Trenin, p. 106.

<sup>93</sup> Mangott, p. 397.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 398.

NATO threat, Moscow may find that its armed forces are unprepared for more serious security challenges in other regions. The past failures to achieve a cooperative relationship between Russia and the Alliance have allowed old threat assessments to linger in the minds of the military leadership. However, recent developments in the relationship between NATO and Russian Federation, combined with President Putin's more realistic approach to Russia's political and military status, could break these old tendencies and open the way for meaningful military reform.

## **IV. NEW INFLUENCES ON RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORM**

As the record of NATO relations with the Russian Federation demonstrates, the interaction with Moscow over the future of the Alliance has been a turbulent one, with cooperation repeatedly warming and cooling throughout the 1990's. NATO's actions in Kosovo and the Alliance's continued enlargement have provided the Russian military with a potential threat it has used to justify resistance to reform within its ranks. NATO expansion also offered political hardliners a target for anti-Western rhetoric. Russia's *National Security Concept* and *Military Doctrine* reflect a basic adversarial vision of NATO, as does Russia's military structure. This preoccupation, combined with limited financial resources and the reluctance of the military elite to pursue aggressively a program of military reform, prevented Russia from adopting a military structure more appropriate to its current and projected defense needs. However, President Vladimir Putin's decision to offer a dramatically increased level of cooperation with NATO and the United States since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and his more realistic approach to Russia's defense needs, has the potential to reverse the existing trends. Closer cooperation between Russia, NATO, and the United States presents the Russian President with an opportunity to overcome the military's conservative attitudes and to begin a more genuine effort to reform Russia's military.

### **A. PERSONAL INFLUENCE OF RUSSIAN PRESIDENT PUTIN**

Vladimir Putin moved quickly to strengthen his position as the new Russian President in 2000. Some social improvements made him very popular with the Russian public. He took advantage of higher oil prices and Russia's tremendous petroleum export capability to speed the recovery from the Russian financial crisis in the late 1990's. Increased revenues led to "the timely payment of state salaries and pensions." This was of particular importance to the Russian public.

[A]ccording to a March 2001 survey, when respondents were asked what they considered to be Putin's major achievements in his first year as president, timely payment of salaries and pension ranked first (39 percent); incorporation of the old Soviet anthem's melody in the new Russian anthem was second (11 percent); foreign policy, third (10 percent); reestablishment of order in Chechnya, fourth (8 percent); and the fight against corruption, fifth (6 percent).<sup>95</sup>

The second and third most popular responses to this survey reflected the other mechanism that Putin used to strengthen his power base. In his first months in office, he relied on anti-American and anti-NATO rhetoric that appealed to the great power nostalgia of Russian military and political elites, reinforcing his image as a great leader.<sup>96</sup> In his July 2000 address to the federal assembly, Putin "promised to restore the country to its position as a great state and to avert the danger 'of the systemic challenge to Russian sovereignty and territorial integrity on the part of those forces striving for the geopolitical restructuring of the world."<sup>97</sup>

The Kremlin used its ability to influence the Russian media to encourage the expression of anti-American sentiment. Putin also worked to use the intelligentsia to fuel opposition to any degradation in Russia's geopolitical standing. For example, he encouraged the publication of a survey of over two hundred foreign policy experts by the Russian Independent Institute of Social and Ethnic Studies. It reported that most of these experts "were strongly against the idea of Russia's establishment of cordial relations with the United States."<sup>98</sup> According to "one of Putin's political advisers, 'Russia must be ready to enter

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<sup>95</sup> Romir Research Group Survey, located at <http://www.romir.ru>. Quoted in Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Is the 'Greatness Syndrome' Eroding?" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002) p. 134.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Vladimir Putin, "Prezidentskoe poslanie federalnomu sobraniu," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, (11 July 2000). Quoted in Shlapentokh, p. 134.

<sup>98</sup> Georgii Bovt, "Rossiiskaia elita izbavliaetsia ot imperskikh ambitsiy v pol'zu provintsializma," *Izvestiia*, (25 May 2001). Cited in Shlapentokh, p. 135.

harsh confrontations with America on all issues related to Russia's role in the world.”<sup>99</sup>

Putin displayed a determination to maintain Russia's position as an influential leader on the European and global stage despite its weakened status. In Moscow's view, Russia remained a major power because of its sheer size, its enormous reserves of natural resources, and it still significant, if degraded, military might. Russia entertained the possibility of an anti-American alliance with India and China and suggested the possibility of “supporting rogue states, such as Iran, ‘as an anti-American trump card.’”<sup>100</sup> In Europe, Putin opposed continued NATO enlargement, particularly the inclusion of the Baltic States. On 3 September 2001, he expressed these concerns. “Pushing NATO's limits to Russia does not create a universal security in Europe, it does not solve any key issue in Europe.”<sup>101</sup> The Russian President was clearly adopting a position that echoed the adversarial perspective of Russia's military leadership.

However, only one week after Putin's comments opposing NATO expansion, the landscape of Russian foreign policy toward the United States and NATO changed dramatically. Moscow's reaction to the atrocities committed at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Al Qaeda terrorists represented a dramatic reversal in Putin's anti-American rhetoric. Within hours, Putin telephoned President Bush to offer Russia's assistance and support. This included the cancellation of a major military exercise in the Pacific that would have taxed airborne surveillance assets needed to secure American airspace in the days following the attack.<sup>102</sup> This personal exchange between the two heads

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<sup>99</sup> *Argumenty i fakty*, (24 January 2001). Quoted in Shlapentokh, pp. 135-136.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Paal Aasaether, “Putin Warns NATO expansion into the Baltics ‘A Mistake,’” *Agence France Presse*, (3 September 2001).

<sup>102</sup> Frederick Kempe. “Making the Most of the Russian Embrace,” *Wall Street Journal Europe*, (7 November 2001).

of state marked the beginning of a much more cooperative approach in Russia's relationship with the United States and NATO.

Putin had several motivations for the dramatic shift in Russian foreign policy. The American campaign to combat terrorism in Central Asia benefits Russia's own security interests. Russia concerns about the rise of Islamic militancy in the region and its own military's inability to deal effectively with this threat made an American campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan very attractive.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Russia's support for the American-led effort helps to justify the ongoing war in Chechnya and reduce foreign criticism over the conduct of the Russian military in the region.<sup>104</sup>

The antagonistic political approach to NATO and the United States that ignores Russia's economic dependence on trading relationships with Europe was a critical mismatch in Russian foreign policy. Despite some recent signs of economic growth based increased on oil exports, Putin recognizes that Russia's financial vitality depends on a strong economic relationship with Europe. "Ranked by the size of its gross national product, Russia place[s] thirteenth in the world, behind even South Korea and the Netherlands."<sup>105</sup> Closer cooperation could strengthen relations with the European Union, which is becoming Russia's most important trading partner, and could help accelerate its entry into the World Trade Organization.<sup>106</sup> Putin has also admitted publicly that Russia must focus on developing its economy instead of engaging in heavy-handed power politics on in international relations: "Decisions are taken on the basis of what we need in reality, not on the moon."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Andrei Piontovsky, "What Allies Does Today's Russia Need?" *The Russia Journal*, (26 October – 1 November 2001).

<sup>104</sup> Kempe. "Making the Most of the Russian Embrace."

<sup>105</sup> Shlapentokh, p. 136.

<sup>106</sup> Geoff Winestock. "Putin Appears to Get Ear of US, EU on Two Fronts-West is Receptive to Russia Regarding WTO Entry, Hears Ideas on NATO," *Wall Street Journal*, (4 October 2001).

<sup>107</sup> Karen Elliot House and Andrew Higgins. "Putin Says Bush Shouldn't Go It Alone", *Wall Street Journal*, (2 February 2002).

Finally, Putin recognized that Russia's military reform effort was hampered by a military doctrine and foreign policy that overemphasized a threat from NATO and the United States. The military leadership exploited the anti-American and anti-NATO sentiment that Putin helped to create, using it as a justification to resist serious force restructuring and reform initiatives. Downplaying this perceived threat would weaken the position of Russia's generals and remove one of the existing obstacles in the process to reform the military.

Two specific factors reflecting the acute problem of military reform drew greater attention from Putin. The first was the loss of the Russian nuclear submarine *Kursk* on 12 August 2000. The immediate impression left by the loss of the Oscar-class submarine was one of growing obsolescence in the Russian Navy and the lack of resources to mount an effective rescue effort to save the lives of the ship's 118-man crew.<sup>108</sup> However, the aftermath of the operation became muddled in false accusations and denials by the navy's commander in chief, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, who attempted to obscure the facts of the disaster. He vigorously advanced the false accusation that the disaster was the result of an incident with a NATO submarine and that the crew had not survived.<sup>109</sup> Kuroyedov's not only misinformed the Russian public, but the Russian navy's objections to Western assistance in a rescue effort may have been fueled by his accusations of NATO involvement in the incident. The disaster not only demonstrated the growing decline in military capability, but also the military leadership's willingness to obscure the facts in an effort to protect its own interests and the limits on civilian oversight of the armed forces.

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<sup>108</sup> "Because Russia lacked the proper equipment and deep-sea divers, the government was forced to commission a Norwegian company to determine if any crewmembers were still alive. In fact, while discussing the *Kursk* disaster, Vladimir Kuroyedov, the commander in chief of the Russian navy, reported that 60 percent of the navy's fleet is more than 15 years old, saying, 'If we cannot change this tendency to obsolescence, in 10 years the Russian navy will disappear.'" *Zavtra*, no. 25 (2001): 2. Quoted in Shlapentokh, p. 137.

<sup>109</sup> Alexander Golts, "Civil Military Relations in Russia, the *Kursk* Disaster and the War in Chechnya," in *Russian National Security Policy under Putin: presented at the Conference held on 7-8 August 2001*. (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2001), p. 10.

Putin's second major military concern was the ongoing conflict in Chechnya. Public support for the war has declined dramatically.

In late 1999, roughly two-thirds of the Russian population favored active military operations in Chechnya ... but in April 2001, only one-third supported the war effort, with 58 percent supporting peace negotiations.<sup>110</sup>

Chechnya has become a huge drain on Russian military resources, demanding the deployment of most of Russia's elite Airborne troops in addition to forces under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the FSB.<sup>111</sup> The military's heavy-handed tactics in Chechnya continues to drive new recruits into the separatist camp and intensifies the decline in Russia's conventional warfighting capability that is becoming increasingly evident.

President Putin demonstrated his willingness to correct the serious problems of insufficient and misappropriated funding for the armed forces. He signed the classified *State Armaments Program* for 2001-2010 on 20 January 2002. The only official information on this document was released in an interview of Deputy Defense Minister for Armaments Colonel General Alexei Moskovsky published in the Russian newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* on 19 February 2002. According to Moskovsky, one of the documents included in the program is the "Plan for the build-up and development of the Armed Forces till 2005." The main emphasis on this program is R&D and serial production of new equipment, which was seriously neglected in the late 1990's. R&D is to now receive approximately forty percent of the defense budget, only slightly less than the amounts dedicated to new production.<sup>112</sup> After 2005, the percentage of the defense budget

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<sup>110</sup> Otto Latsis, "Glasnost Is Out of Fashion," *Russia Journal*, located at <http://www.russ.ru/>. Cited in Shlapentokh, p. 134.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>112</sup> According to Moskovsky, "[i]n 2001, 41% of the defense state order went for R&D, while serial production received 48%. It is expected that in 2002 the proportion will be 37% for R&D and 51% for serial production." Vitaly V. Shlykov. "Russian Defense Industrial Complex After 9-11." in *Russian Security Policy and the War on Terrorism: presented at the Conference held on 4-5 June 2002*. (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), pp. 11-12.

dedicated to procurement will rise from sixty-five to seventy percent. Force maintenance costs will receive a consistent eleven to twelve percent until 2010.<sup>113</sup> It is unclear how closely this plan will be followed, but it could reflect a more balanced attempt to fund the transformation of the Russian armed forces.

More importantly, Putin has begun to recognize the need to overcome the opposition to reform that is so heavily entrenched within the military leadership. One way to eliminate this opposition is to simply remove the generals. Over a year after the *Kursk* accident, Putin suddenly demoted a number of admirals with connections to the incident. In November 2001,

Putin punished the admirals at precisely the moment when mutual tension between the generals and the Kremlin became evident. Just at this moment, rumors began to circulate in Moscow that Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, a close Putin ally, doesn't have authority with the generals. Putin chose this moment to give the military a public dressing down. Unlike former Defense minister Gen. Igor Rodinov, who was fired by then President Boris Yeltsin, these military bosses, whose responsibility is obvious, can't claim that they have fallen victim to intrigues. Putin, it seems, kept them in reserve with a black mark against their names, waiting for the right moment to show the Army just how tough he can be. Now the moment has come. Rumors that are circulating in [the Ministry of Defense] now say that Putin is preparing to abolish one thousand generals' positions (more than half).<sup>114</sup>

The threat of losing their coveted postings, along with many desirable benefits, could have a dramatic effect on the military leadership's resistance to reform. The generals are under increasing pressure to drop their opposition and begin a more serious effort to correct the military's problems.

## B. IMPACT OF RECENT SECURITY AGREEMENTS

Despite his efforts to reign in the generals, perhaps the most effective way to overcome their opposition to reform is to diminish the foundation of the claims

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander Golts. "Russian Volunteer Military – A New Attempt?" p. 11.

that NATO and the United States remain a serious threat to Russian security. Since his sudden move to support the American campaign on terrorism in the wake of the 11 September attacks, Putin has reached a number of agreements that deepen Russia's cooperation with its former adversaries. The creation of the NATO-Russia Council, military cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan, and the signing of the treaty of Moscow all contribute to the effort by the Russian President to reduce the antagonistic relationships with the West.

A more cooperative approach to future relations between NATO and Russia appeared in late 2001. Originally dubbed "NATO at Twenty", this agreement emerged following a meeting between President Putin and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson in Brussels in 3 October 2001 and aimed to establish new council to replace the Permanent Joint Council set up in 1997 as a consultative forum between the Alliance and Moscow. On 28 May 2002, at NATO's summit in Rome, the NATO-Russia Council was formally established after several months of negotiation.<sup>115</sup> The goal of this new council is to allow greater Russian involvement in NATO decision-making. Chaired by the Secretary General, it grants Russia the ability to take joint decisions with the other members of the Alliance in areas such as anti-terrorism, crisis management, nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, ballistic missile defense, search and rescue at sea, and civil emergency response.<sup>116</sup> Core discussions over collective defense issues would remain with the actual NATO membership, as would any decision on NATO enlargement, with no power to block these

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<sup>115</sup> Decisions on the shape and scope of the NATO-Russia Council were not taken without some dispute. For example, in March 2002, Deputy Foreign Minister Yevgeni Gusharov produced a document demanding any decisions taken by the 19 NATO members and Russia should be permanently binding on the alliance. NATO's membership was strongly opposed to such an arrangement, calling it an attempt "to emasculate the power of the North Atlantic Council, the alliance's principal decision-making body." Michael Evans. "Russian Bid to 'Weaken' NATO Alienates West," *Times Online*, (16 March 2002. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0,,3-237399,00.html> 20 August 2002).

<sup>116</sup> "NATO and Russia Seal New Ties," *BBC News*, 7 December 2001, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_1695000/1695131.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1695000/1695131.stm), 25 August 2002).

actions granted to Moscow. However, the alliance members would approach their discussions with the Russians with no pre-coordinated positions.<sup>117</sup>

The NATO-Russia Council promises to reinvigorate a cooperative relationship between Brussels and Moscow that was disrupted by the NATO intervention in Kosovo. It establishes a regular dialogue between Russia's military and political leadership and their Alliance counterparts.

[M]eetings of the NATO-Russia Council will be held at least monthly at the level of ambassadors and military representatives; twice yearly at the level of foreign and defence ministers and chiefs of staff; and occasionally at summit level.<sup>118</sup>

These meetings should promote greater transparency in the areas of military planning and threat assessments, reassuring the Russian leadership that NATO poses no threat. Increased participation in joint military exercises also has the potential to promote a more optimistic attitude among Russian officers about NATO's post-Cold War purpose.

While increased military cooperation between NATO and Russia appears to be likely in the near future, Russia's most significant cooperative military effort with the West has been its alignment with the United States since 11 September 2002. President Putin ignored the opposition expressed by the Russian military, including Defense Minister Ivanov, to any participation or assistance in the American campaign in Afghanistan. Instead, he fully supported the use of bases in Central Asia by U.S. forces and authorized the use of Russian airspace in support of the war effort. He also suggested the Russian military could participate in the campaign, despite objections from the political and military elite who were reluctant to commit to another military operation in Afghanistan. Veterans of the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan believed the American effort was likely to fail and had little interest in providing assistance.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *NATO Fact Sheet: NATO-Russia relations*. (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 11 June 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/nato-rus.htm>, 20 November 2002).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Shlapentokh, p. 142.

Russia's military cooperation in Operation Enduring Freedom has been significant. Officially reported Russian military contributions in Afghanistan have been limited to non-combat activities. According to the US State Department, Russian contributions have included:

- Russia started providing humanitarian assistance to the population of Afghanistan in October 2001. Russia has supported HA operations by transporting more than 420,296 tons of food commodities, 2,198 tons of medicines, 15,282 beds, 1,200 heaters, 13 mini electric power stations, 780 tents, 11,000 blankets, 49,674 bedding kits, 11,000 pieces of kitchen utensils, and nine tons of detergents.
- In December 2001, Russian personnel started reconstruction of the Salang tunnel, a major transport structure connecting northern and southern provinces of Afghanistan. In January 2002, the Salang tunnel was officially opened for regular traffic.
- In January 2002, as a result of a joint Russian-German project, pontoon passage across Pianj River was put into service. Together with the Salang tunnel it allowed the organization of a continuous route from Tajikistan to central region of Afghanistan for delivery of international humanitarian assistance.
- Russia provided the first coalition hospital in Kabul on November 29, 2001. The hospital treated more than 6,000 patients before Russia turned the facility over to the local population on January 25, 2002.
- On March 29, 2002, EMERCOM (Russia's Emergency Response Organization) deployed its mobile hospital to Nakhreen and began medical assistance to the victims of the earthquake in Afghanistan. Thus far, EMERCOM has delivered over 100 metric tons of HA supplies to the Nakhreen area to include: provisions; medicines; and means for cleaning water. Additionally, Russian rescue teams have conducted search and rescue operations throughout the area.
- On April 24, 2002, Russia presented the Afghan government 42 special vehicles including 37 tracked, two fuel, two maintenance vehicles and two 4-wheel drive vehicles.<sup>120</sup>

In addition, Russia supplied the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance with heavy weapons prior to 11 September 2001 and continues to do so. Putin reportedly used the influence he gained through these sales "to persuade the Russian-

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<sup>120</sup> U.S. Department of State. *International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism*. (Washington, DC: International Information Programs, 14 June 2002, <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/020815contribute.htm>, 1 November 2002).

backed factions within the Afghan Northern Alliance to support Hamid Karzai as their new president.”<sup>121</sup> Russia has also made significant contributions in intelligence gathering, though the specific nature of the information shared has not been disclosed. According to Defense Minister Ivanov, “[t]o a large extent, it concerns Russia’s use of special services and here I cannot comment any further.”<sup>122</sup> Rumors of direct military involvement includes suggests that the United States has hired Russian mercenaries to fight in the war, though this is strongly denied by Defense Minister Ivanov.<sup>123</sup>

Moscow’s assistance in gaining access to bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan has been critical to the American war effort. It provided US forces with forward base to mount operations in Afghanistan, reducing the dependence on military assets delivered through Pakistan from the Indian Ocean. Recently, the American media has revealed that Russia not only permitted the use of its airspace by American aircraft, but also allowed the use of its rail links to Central Asia to transport “huge shipments of American war materiel … through Russian territory by rail, from northern European ports in Murmansk and Helsinki, and from the Russian Far Eastern port of Vladivostok.”<sup>124</sup> While the Russian’s have refused to confirm these reports, the transport of US war material through Russian territory represents the most significant direct military cooperation with the American armed forces since World War II.<sup>125</sup> Professor Dick Melanson of

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<sup>121</sup> Michael Moran and Robert Windrem. *New Russia-U.S. war ties revealed*. MSNBC News, (31 October 2002. <http://www.msnbc.com/news/828715.asp>, 19 November 2002).

<sup>122</sup> “Rumsfeld and Putin Praise Cooperation,” *Moscow Times*. (5 November 2001. <http://www.moscowtimes.ru/stories/2001/11/05/003.html>, 10 November 2002).

<sup>123</sup> “Rumors of War,” *Russia Week*, Vol 4, Issue 44. (28 November 2001. [http://russia.jamestown.org/pubs/view/bul\\_006\\_044\\_001.htm](http://russia.jamestown.org/pubs/view/bul_006_044_001.htm), 2 November 2002).

<sup>124</sup> Based on documents obtained from the US Central Command. Moran and Windrem. *New Russia-U.S. war ties revealed*.

<sup>125</sup> “Apparently the Russian authorities don’t want to emphasize it,’ said Moscow-based military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, who noted that Russian nationalists would seize upon the shipments in political attacks on the Kremlin.” Moran and Windrem. *New Russia-U.S. war ties revealed*.

the National War College suggests “that [this assistance] takes the relationship [between Washington and Moscow] to another level.”<sup>126</sup>

The success of the American campaign in Afghanistan presents a number of important implications for the Russian military reform process. Doubts by Russian generals that America’s volunteer military force could successfully conduct a military operation in Afghanistan’s mountains proved to be groundless. It also dramatically illustrated the broadening gap between American and Russian conventional military capability, which has grown significantly since the Persian Gulf War. Most importantly, the high level of cooperation reached during the conflict weakens claims by Russia’s elite that the greatest threat to Russian security emanates from the West. In fact, closer cooperation between Moscow and Washington resulted in the ouster of the Taliban, a regime considered to be among the principle dangers to Russian security in Central Asia, and a threat the Russian military was ill prepared to face.<sup>127</sup>

Finally, President Putin’s effort to align Russia with the West has led to a significant agreement with the United States on the reduction of strategic nuclear arms. Signed at the summit between the President Putin and President Bush in Moscow on 24 May 2002, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty calls for the reduction of both countries’ strategic nuclear arsenals to 1,700-2,200 warheads by 31 December 2012.<sup>128</sup> This treaty differs in several important areas from the START II treaty, which the Russian Duma terminated after the official American withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. SORT does not call for reductions in the number of strategic delivery systems, only the warheads, nor

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Taliban as a threat to Russian security discussed in Menon, Federov and Nodia, p. 198; lack of Russian military capability to deal with threats in Central Asia discussed in Cohen, Arial. “The Lack of Russian Military Reform helped Usher US Forces into Central Asia.” *EurasiaNet.org*, (22 January 2002, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012202.shtml>, 5 November 2002).

<sup>128</sup> *Text of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty*. (Washington DC: The White House, 24 May 2002. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020524-3.html>, 21 November 2002).

does it place any limits on the use of multiple-warhead land-based missiles beyond those established in the START I treaty.<sup>129</sup> The absence of limits on multiple-warhead weapons was a concession to American interests in deploying a National Missile Defense (NMD) system.<sup>130</sup> But more importantly, the treaty satisfied Russian demands for a legally binding agreement to replace START II, establishing new limits in the number of deployed warheads available to both countries.<sup>131</sup>

While SORT is yet to be ratified by the US Senate or the Russian Duma, and the detailed procedures for dismantlement are yet to be established, this treaty has the potential to have a dramatic effect on Russian defense spending and, in turn, Russian military reform. By establishing a new, lower ceiling for strategic warhead totals and allowing the continued use of multiple warheads on a single weapon, SORT greatly reduces the number of strategic delivery systems needed by Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces to maintain an arsenal comparable to the United States. In doing so, the treaty insures that Russia will retain a sufficient strategic nuclear arsenal, relative to the United States, to provide a symbol of its a great power status. This reduces the pressure to retain Russia's fleet of ballistic missiles at current levels, along with forces and services need to maintain them. Assuming defense spending, at a minimum, remains constant, this should allow increased spending on the financially strained conventional forces.

Collectively, Putin's efforts to create a closer strategic partnership with both the United States and NATO have weakened claims by Russia's military leadership that the West represents a threat to Russian security. In doing so, he

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<sup>129</sup> "U.S.-Soviet/Russian Nuclear Arms Control," *Arms Control Today*, June 2002. (Arms Control Association. [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002\\_06/factfilejune02.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_06/factfilejune02.asp). 18 November 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Ballistic missiles carrying multiple warheads present a much more difficult target for any potential missile defense system once the warheads have separated from the delivery vehicle. Such weapons are more likely to defeat a missile defense system intended to deal with a small number of targets.

<sup>131</sup> Victor Mizon. "Issues and Analysis: The Treaty of Moscow," *Nuclear Threat Initiative*. (Monterey, CA: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, July 2002. [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/e3\\_14b.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_14b.html). 19 November 2002).

has removed much of the justification used by the generals to maintain Russia's bloated military structure and resist a genuine reform effort. However, the effort to maintain and strengthen these relationships and translate reduced threat perceptions into substantial military reform still faces a number of obstacles.

### **C. REMAINING OBSTACLES TO CLOSER COOPERATION AND MILITARY REFORM**

Numerous challenges still confront President Putin in his effort to develop a more cooperative security relationship with NATO and the United States. These obstacles may limit the success of any attempt to reform the Russian armed forces by reinforcing the position that Russia's security is endangered by a threat from the West.

The conflict in Chechnya is often criticized as a major inhibitor to the military reform process. Demanding the deployment of most of Russia's elite forces, Chechnya continues to consume resources badly needed to rebuild the military while the constant guerilla fighting erodes the already low moral of Russian troops. Equally significant is the detrimental effect the conflict has had on relations with the West. Since the bombardment of Grozny in November 1999, Russia has been criticized for numerous human rights abuses. These acts of brutality simply incite retaliation from Chechens, perpetuate a cycle of violence, and result in a mounting number of civilian casualties.<sup>132</sup> Moscow's close alignment with the United States and reinvigorated cooperation with NATO since 11 September 2001 silenced much of the criticism of Russian conduct.<sup>133</sup> However, as the campaign in Afghanistan comes to a close and the US focus shifts toward other regions, the more sympathetic view of Russia's war against Chechen terrorists may begin to evaporate. The seizure of a Moscow theater by Chechen terrorists and the subsequent assault by Russia forces was a

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<sup>132</sup> Anatol Lieven, "Nightmare in the Caucasus," *The Washington Quarterly*, (Winter 2000. <http://www.twq.com/winter00/231Lieven.pdf>. 28 November 2002), p. 158.

<sup>133</sup> Oksana Antonenko, "Fighting Terrorism: For the U.S. and Russia, One War but Two Agendas," *Carnegie Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (Spring 2002). <http://www.carnegie.org/reporter/04/backpage/russia.html>. 28 November 2002).

demonstration of Putin's continued inability to find a solution to the conflict. Renewed Western criticism of the war in Chechnya could weaken Putin's effort to pursue closer cooperation with NATO and the United States.

Division over the course of the war on terror could also create a rift in US-Russian relations. An example of how this might occur is the recent disagreements between Washington and Moscow over the renewed US interest in a campaign against Iraq. Russia's vision for dealing with Iraq has differed significantly from that of the United States and Britain. Putin expressed serious reservations about unilateral US military action against Iraq and expressed doubts about American evidence claiming the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>134</sup> Russia favored a settlement of the Iraq crisis "through political and diplomatic methods based on U.N. Security Council resolutions."<sup>135</sup> Putin supported the return of UN inspectors but stated, "Russia's position has always been that no new [UN] resolution [on Iraq] is necessary [...]"<sup>136</sup> In October 2002, Putin's position began to soften slightly, suggesting that he did "not rule out reaching a joint position, including a UN resolution."<sup>137</sup> Russia's opposition contributed to the US decision to back away from a unilateral military action against Iraq and led to the adoption of a UN resolution that did not authorize immediate military action against Iraq.

While it ultimately ended in an agreement, the dispute over Iraq demonstrated that there are limits to Putin's willingness to surrender Russia's position as a great power in building a closer ties with the United States. Moscow's insistence on a UN decision prior to any action against Iraq reflects a desire to preserve the importance of Russia's permanent UN Security Council

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<sup>134</sup> "Russia foresees deal on Iraq," *BBC News*. (11 October 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2318661.stm>. 22 November 2002).

<sup>135</sup> Putin quoted in "Putin: UN must take lead on Iraq," *CNN.com*. (26 September 2002. <http://europe.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/09/26/russia.iraq/>. 21 November 2002).

<sup>136</sup> Putin quoted in "Russia foresees deal on Iraq."

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

seat. Should similar disagreements occur in the future, concerns that Russia's geopolitical influence might be marginalized could lead to the deterioration of the cooperative relationships built since 11 September 2001.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge is the anti-Western sentiment that still exists in Russia. Putin's alignment with the West was pursued despite opposition from political and military elites, as well as the Russian public. According to a public opinion poll conducted in September 2001, "54 percent of Russians favored neutrality in the conflict between the United States and Islamic terrorists. Nearly 70 percent felt that Russia should deny U.S. forces the use of Russian bases in Central Asia."<sup>138</sup> Foreign policy analyst Dmitri Trenin commented on Putin's departure from the more commonly held attitudes toward the West:

Putin clearly has broken with the foreign policy and national security bureaucracies, the bulk of which favored a much more cautious approach. Many of those people are instinctively anti-American, and they viewed the terrorist attacks as the product of misguided American policies. Now with this truly strategic step, Putin has shown he's a true leader, and given the opposition, he will need to show a lot of additional leadership to sustain himself in that role.<sup>139</sup>

Putin's decision was made possible by his personal popularity with the Russian public. Enjoying an approval rating of seventy-five percent, he has been able to ignore the opposition to his pro-Western policies.<sup>140</sup> Putin has gained the "leverage [necessary] to apply more pressure on his 'recalcitrant' generals, who could be forced to retire or stripped of their pensions if they disagree with the new policies."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> James Kitfield, "Putin's Leap of Faith," *National Journal*, (6 October 2001. <http://www.topica.com/lists/nato/read/message.html?sort=d&mid=1604999811&start=130>. 30 October 2002).

<sup>139</sup> Dmitri Trenin, of the Moscow Center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, quoted in Kitfield, "Putin's Leap of Faith."

<sup>140</sup> House and Higgins, "Bush Shouldn't Go It Alone".

<sup>141</sup> Mizon. "Issues and Analysis: The Treaty of Moscow."

However, as the 2004 Presidential election approaches, Putin may be forced to retreat from his pro-Western policies. Public dissatisfaction with low standards of living and declining support for the war in Chechnya could damage his popularity.<sup>142</sup> Such a situation could force him to once again champion a more anti-Western position, tapping into the persisting perceptions among many Russians of a threat posed by NATO and the United States.<sup>143</sup> Such a shift in policy would have a negative impact on Russia's military reform effort, reinvigorating the claims by Russia's military leaders that large, conscription-based armed forces, supported by a robust nuclear arsenal, are required to meet a threat to Russian security from the United States and NATO. The generals could return to claims that military reform is simply too expensive to accomplish in an adversarial international security environment.

While these various factors threaten to weaken President Putin's effort to overcome lingering perceptions of threat from the West, the recent agreements with NATO and the United States promise to strengthen their new ties with Russia and sustain a more cooperative relationship. When viewed collectively, Putin's push to overcome the resistance to military reform within the senior ranks of the armed forces and his pursuit of a more cooperative relationship with the United States and NATO point to a dramatic shift in Russia's security outlook. Minimizing outdated threat perceptions may clear the way for a transformation of the military to a design better suited to Russia's needs in today's security environment.

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<sup>142</sup> "According to a 2001 survey conducted by the All-Russian Center of Public Opinion Studies (VTSIOM), 67 percent of Russians thought that material life in the country had either "not changed or declined" during the previous year, and 73 percent said that the level of corruption "had stayed the same or grew worse. ... In late 1999, roughly two-thirds of the Russian population favored active military operations in Chechnya (including air strikes); but in April 2001, only one-third supported the war effort, with 58 percent supporting peace negotiations." Shlapentokh, p. 134.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 135.

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## V. CONCLUSION

President Putin's decision to align Russia with the West since 11 September 2001 may prove to have a dramatic impact on the future evolution of Russia's military. The resistance to reform within Russia's military leadership has been weakened by Russia's closer cooperation with NATO and the United States. Claims by Russian generals that threats posed by the West require the retention of a large, conscript-based, military structure designed to fight a large-scale war have become increasingly difficult to support. Removing this obstacle could clear the way for a more dramatic restructuring of the Russian armed forces than has occurred thus far. The slow and largely unsuccessful reform effort of the 1990's could now give way to a serious attempt to reorient Russian military doctrine and structure to deal with much more threatening security challenges in other regions.

Ratification of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty by the Russian Duma and the US Senate will reduce the pressure on Russia to maintain its large strategic nuclear arsenal. Combined with Putin's steady effort to increase funding for the armed forces, the reduced cost associated with maintaining smaller strategic forces will make a greater portion of the Russian defense budget available for the spending on conventional forces.<sup>144</sup> Increases in procurement and R&D will help correct the problems of Russia's decaying conventional military capability.

A reformed Russian military could make Russia an increasingly valuable partner for NATO and the United States in the future. Russia's dominant geographic position in Asia will make it a very relevant actor in the region and a modern military capable of joint operations with Western forces could be a key element in future crises. Military-to-military consultation institutionalized in the NATO-Russia Council could form the foundation of a cooperative effort that helps shape Russia's future military capability. As NATO deepens its relationship with Moscow through the "at twenty" agreement, the Alliance should seek to expand

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<sup>144</sup> Belkin, p. 9.

its cooperation on military issues. Likewise, as the American campaign in Afghanistan moves into the post-hostilities phase and the war on terror moves to other regions, the United States should continue to take advantage of future opportunities for military cooperation. Strengthening these ties will promote greater transparency in military issues and encourage the development of joint military practices.

Despite the benefits a cooperative relationship with the West provides, the military reform process still demands a serious commitment by Russia. While reducing threat perceptions can influence Moscow's decisions on force structure and defense spending, and minimize the use of Western military might by Russia's generals as a justification to resist reform, the deeper social issues, declining military moral, and transition to a volunteer force requires serious commitments. As long as the war in Chechnya continues to drain military resources, meaningful progress on these issues will be difficult.<sup>145</sup> As the US technological lead widens, it will be increasingly difficult for the Russian military to modernize to a level at which it can serve as an effective partner in US-led military operations. Limited civilian oversight leaves conservative elements within the military too much latitude in the allocation of scarce financial resources and the absence of a comprehensive military reform plan permits inefficient practices to continue.<sup>146</sup> Putin's popularity allows him to exercise a greater degree of control over the generals, and he has demonstrated a willingness to remove senior officers who disagree with his policies. However, Putin has limited political capital and it is unclear if he is willing to expend all of it reigning in the generals, and, in turn, risking his own political future.

While the future of Russia's military reform effort remains uncertain, closer cooperation with NATO and the United States have produced some promising signs. President Putin recognizes that a strategic partnership with the West is in both the short and long-term interests of his country. Similarly, Washington and

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<sup>145</sup> Arbatov. *Transformation of Russian Military Doctrine*, p. 26.

<sup>146</sup> Shlykov, "Resource Allocation." p. 23.

Brussels should not underestimate the benefits that closer ties with Russia could bring in the future. Historically, Russia has gone through repeated cycles of military backwardness, and in every case, it has reemerged as strong military power and a prominent actor in international relations. It would be shortsighted to believe that Russia will never recover from its current military difficulties. Such a recovery may take decades to accomplish, but America and the NATO allies should seize this opportunity to influence positively the course of military reform. It could ultimately lead to the emergence of a potent ally rather than a dangerous adversary.

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